

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "MARY BARTON."

CHAPTER VI.

AT Easter—just when the heavens and earth were looking their dreariest, for Easter fell very early this year—Mr. Corbet came down. Mr. Wilkins was too busy to see much of him; they were together even less than usual, although not less friendly when they did meet. But to Ellinor the visit was one of unmixed happiness. Hitherto she had always had a little fear mingled up with her love of Mr. Corbet; but his manners were softened, his opinions less decided and abrupt, and his whole treatment of her showed such tenderness that the young girl basked and revelled in it. One or two of their conversations had reference to their future married life in London; and she then perceived, although it did not jar against her, that her lover had not forgotten his ambition in his love. He tried to inoculate her with something of his own craving for success in life; but it was all in vain: she nestled to him and told him she did not care to be the Lord Chancellor's wife—wigs and woollacks were not in her line; only if he wished it, she would wish it.

The last two days of his stay the weather changed. Sudden heat burst forth, as it does occasionally for a few hours even in our chilly English spring. The grey-brown bushes and trees started almost with visible progress into the tender green shade which is the forerunner of the bursting leaves. The sky was of full cloudless blue. Mr. Wilkins was to come home pretty early from the office to ride out with his daughter and her lover; but, after waiting some time for him, it grew too late, and they were obliged to give up the project. Nothing would serve Ellinor, then, but that she must carry out a table and have tea in the garden, on the sunny side of the tree, among the roots of which she used to play when a child. Miss Monro objected a little to this caprice of Ellinor's, saying that it was too early for out-of-door meals; but Mr. Corbet overruled all objections, and helped Ellinor in her gay preparations. She always kept to the early hours of her childhood, although she, as then, regularly sat with her father at his late dinner, and this meal, *à fresco*, was to be a

reality to her and Miss Monro. There was a place arranged for her father, and she seized upon him as he was coming from the stable-yard, by the shrubbery path, to his study, and with merry playfulness made him a prisoner, accusing him of disappointing them of their ride, and drawing him, more than half unwilling, to his chair by the table. But he was silent, and almost sad; his presence damped them all, they could hardly tell why, for he did not object to anything, though he seemed to enjoy nothing, and only to force a smile at Ellinor's occasional sallies. These became more and more rare, as she perceived her father's depression. She watched him anxiously. He perceived it, and said—shivering in that strange unaccountable manner which is popularly explained by the expression that some one is passing over the earth that will one day form your grave—

"Ellinor! this is not a day for out-of-door tea. I never felt so chilly a spot in my life. I cannot keep from shaking where I sit. I must leave this place, my dear, in spite of all your good tea."

"Oh, papa! I am so sorry. But look how full that hot sun's rays come on this turf. I thought I had chosen such a capital spot!"

But he got up and persisted in leaving the table, although he was evidently sorry to spoil the little party. He walked up and down the gravel-walk, close by them, talking to them as he kept passing by, and trying to cheer them up.

"Are you warmer now, papa?" asked Ellinor.

"Oh yes! All right. It is only that place that seems so chilly and damp. I am as warm as a toast now."

The next morning Mr. Corbet left them. The unseasonably fine weather passed away too, and all things went back to their rather grey and dreary aspect; but Ellinor was too happy to feel this much, knowing what absent love existed for her alone, and from this knowledge unconsciously trusting in the sun behind the clouds.

I have said that few or none in the immediate neighbourhood of Hamley, besides their own household and Mr. Ness, knew of Ellinor's engagement. At one of the rare dinner-parties to which she accompanied her father—it was at the old lady's house who chaperoned her to the assemblies—she was taken into dinner by a young clergyman staying in the neighbourhood. He

had just had a small living given to him in his own county, and he felt as if this was a great step in his life. He was good, innocent, and rather boyish in appearance. Ellinor was happy and at her ease, and chatted away to this Mr. Livingstone on many little points of interest which they found they had in common; church music, and the difficulty they had of getting people to sing in parts; Salisbury Cathedral, which they had both seen; styles of church architecture, Ruskin's works, and parish schools, in which Mr. Livingstone was somewhat shocked to find that Ellinor took no great interest. When the gentlemen came in from the dining-room, it struck Ellinor, for the first time in her life, that her father had taken more wine than was good for him. Indeed, this had rather become a habit with him of late; but as he always tried to go quietly off to his own room when such had been the case, his daughter had never been made aware of it before, and the perception of it now made her cheeks hot with shame. She thought that every one must be as conscious of his altered manner and way of speaking as she was, and after a pause of sick silence, during which she could not say a word, she set to and talked to Mr. Livingstone about parish schools, anything, with redoubled vigour and apparent interest, in order to keep one or two of the company, at least, from noticing what was to her so painfully obvious.

The effect of her behaviour was far more than she had intended. She kept Mr. Livingstone, it is true, from observing her father; but she also riveted his attention on herself. He had thought her very pretty and agreeable during dinner; but after dinner he considered her bewitching, irresistible. He dreamed of her all night, and wakened up the next morning to a calculation of how far his income would allow him to furnish his pretty new parsonage with that crowning blessing, a wife. For a day or two he did up little sums, and sighed, and thought of Ellinor, her face listening with admiring interest to his sermons, her arm passed into his as they went together round the parish; her sweet voice instructing classes in his schools—turn where he would, in his imagination Ellinor's presence rose up before him.

The consequence was, that he wrote an offer, which he found a far more perplexing piece of composition than a sermon; a real hearty expression of love, going on, over all obstacles, to a straightforward explanation of his present prospects and future hopes, and winding up with the information that on the succeeding morning he would call to know whether he might speak to Mr. Wilkins on the subject of this letter. It was given to Ellinor in the evening, as she was sitting with Miss Monro in the library. Mr. Wilkins was dining out, she hardly knew where, as it was a sudden engagement, of which he had sent word from the office—a gentleman's dinner-party, she supposed, as he had dressed in Hamley without coming home. Ellinor turned over the

letter when it was brought to her, as some people do when they cannot recognise the handwriting, as if to discover from paper or seal, what two moments would assure them of, if they opened the letter and looked at the signature. Ellinor could not guess who had written it by any outward sign; but the moment she saw the name "Herbert Livingstone," the meaning of the letter flashed upon her, and she coloured all over. She put the letter away, unread, for a few minutes, and then made some excuse for leaving the room and going up-stairs. When safe in her bed-chamber, she read the young man's eager words with a sense of self-reproach. How must she, engaged to one man, have been behaving to another, if this was the result of one evening's interview? The self-reproach was unjustly bestowed; but with that we have nothing to do. She made herself very miserable; and at last, went down with a heavy heart to go on with Dante, and rummage up words in the dictionary. All the time she seemed to Miss Monro to be plodding on with her Italian more diligently and sedately than usual, she was planning in her own mind to go to her father as soon as he returned (and he had said that he should not be late), and beg him to undo the mischief she had done by seeing Mr. Livingstone the next morning, and frankly explaining the real state of affairs to him. But she wanted to read her letter again, and think it all over in peace; and so, at an early hour, she wished Miss Monro good night, and went up into her own room above the drawing-room, and overlooking the flower-garden and shrubbery-path to the stable-yard, by which her father was sure to return. She went up-stairs and studied her letter well, and tried to recal all her speeches and conduct on that miserable evening—as she thought it then—not knowing what true misery was. Her head ached, and she put out the candle, and went and sat on the window-seat, looking out into the moonlit garden, watching for her father. She opened the window; partly to cool her forehead, partly to enable her to call down softly when she should see him coming along. By-and-by the door from the stable-yard into the shrubbery clicked and opened, and in a moment she saw Mr. Wilkins moving through the bushes; but not alone, Mr. Dunster was with him, and the two were talking together in rather excited tones, immediately lost to hearing, however, as they entered Mr. Wilkins's study by the outer door.

"They have been dining together somewhere. Probably at Mr. Hanbury's" (the Hamley brewer), thought Ellinor. "But how provoking that he should have come home with papa this night of all nights!"

Two or three times before, Mr. Dunster had called on Mr. Wilkins in the evening, as Ellinor knew: but she was not quite aware of the reason for such late visits, and had never put together the two facts—(as cause and consequence)—that on such occasions her father had been absent from the office all day, and that there might be

necessary business for him to transact, the urgency of which was the motive for Mr. Dunster's visits. Mr. Wilkins always seemed to be annoyed by his coming at so late an hour, and spoke of it, resenting the intrusion upon his leisure; and Ellinor, without consideration, adopted her father's mode of speaking and thinking on the subject, and was rather more angry than he was whenever the obnoxious partner came on business in the evening. This night was of all nights the most ill-purposed time (so Ellinor thought) for a tête-à-tête with her father! However, there was no doubt in her mind as to what she had to do. So late as it was, the unwelcome visitor could not stop long; and then she would go down and have her little confidence with her father, and beg him to see Mr. Livingstone when he came the next morning, and dismiss him as gently as might be.

She sat on in the window-seat; dreaming waking dreams of future happiness. She kept losing herself in such thoughts, and became almost afraid of forgetting why she sat there. Presently she felt cold, and got up to fetch a shawl, in which she muffled herself and resumed her place. It seemed to her growing very late; the moonlight was coming fuller and fuller into the garden, and the blackness of the shadow was more concentrated and stronger. Surely Mr. Dunster could not have gone away along the dark shrubbery-path, so noiselessly but what she must have heard him? No! there was the swell of voices coming up through the window from her father's study: angry voices they were; and her anger rose sympathetically, as she knew that her father was being irritated. There was a sudden movement, as of chairs pushed hastily aside, and then a mysterious unaccountable noise—heavy, sudden; and then a slight movement as of chairs again; and then a profound stillness. Ellinor leaned her head against the side of the window to listen more intently, for some mysterious instinct made her sick and faint. No sound—no noise. Only by-and-by she heard, what we have all heard at such times of intent listening, the beating of the pulses of her heart, and then the whirling rush of blood through her head. How long did this last? She never knew. By-and-by she heard her father's hurried footstep in his bedroom, next to hers; but when she ran thither to speak to him, and ask him what was amiss—if anything had been—if she might come to him now about Mr. Livingstone's letter, she found that he had gone down again to his study, and almost at the same moment she heard the little private outer door of that room open; some one went out, and then there were hurried footsteps along the shrubbery-path. She thought of course that it was Mr. Dunster leaving the house; and went back for Mr. Livingstone's letter. Having found it, she passed through her father's room to the private staircase, thinking that if she went by the more regular way, she would have run the risk of disturbing Miss Monro, and perhaps of being

questioned in the morning. Even in passing down this remote staircase, she trod softly for fear of being overheard. When she entered the room, the full light of the candles dazzled her for an instant, coming out of the darkness. They were flaring wildly in the draught that came in through the open door, by which the outer air was admitted; for a moment there seemed to be no one in the room; and then she saw, with strange sick horror, the legs of some one lying on the carpet behind the table. As if compelled, even while she shrank from doing it, she went round to see who it was that lay there, so still and motionless as never to stir at her sudden coming. It was Mr. Dunster; his head propped on chair-cushions, his eyes open, staring, distended. There was a strong smell of brandy and hartshorn in the room; a smell so powerful as not to be neutralised by the free current of night air that blew through the two open doors. Ellinor could not have told if it was reason or instinct that made her act as she did during this awful night. In thinking of it afterwards, with shuddering avoidance of the haunting memory that would come and overshadow her during many, many years of her life, she grew to believe that the powerful smell of the spilt brandy absolutely intoxicated her—an unconscious Rechabite in practice. But something gave her a presence of mind and a courage not her own. And though she learnt to think afterwards that she had acted unwisely, if not wrongly and wickedly, yet she marvelled, in recalling that time, how she could have then behaved as she did. First of all she lifted herself up from her fascinated gaze at the dead man, and went to the staircase door, by which she had entered the study, and shut it softly. Then she went back—looked again; took the brandy-bottle, and knelt down, and tried to pour some into the mouth; but this she found she could not do. Then she wetted her handkerchief with the spirit, and moistened the lips; all to no purpose; for as I have said before the man was dead—killed by a rupture of a vessel of the brain; how occasioned, I must tell by-and-by. Of course, all Ellinor's little cares and efforts produced no effect; her father had tried them before—vain endeavours all, to bring back the precious breath of life! The poor girl could not bear the look of those open eyes, and softly, tenderly, tried to close them, although unconscious that in so doing she was rendering the pious offices of some beloved hand to a dead man. She was sitting by the body on the floor when she heard steps coming, with rushing and yet cautious tread, through the shrubbery; she had no fear, although it might be the tread of robbers and murderers. The awfulness of the hour raised her above common fears; though she did not go through the usual process of reasoning, and by it feel assured that the feet which were coming so softly and swiftly along were the same which she had heard leaving the room in like manner only a quarter of an hour before.

Her father entered, and started back, almost

upsetting some one behind him by his recoil, on seeing his daughter in her motionless attitude by the dead man.

"My God, Ellinor! what has brought you here?" he said, almost fiercely.

But she answered as one stupefied,

"I don't know. Is he dead?"

"Hush, hush, child; it cannot be helped."

She raised her eyes to the solemn, pitying, awe-stricken face behind her father's—the countenance of Dixon.

"Is he dead?" she asked of him.

The man stepped forwards, respectfully pushing his master on one side as he did so. He bent down over the corpse, and looked, and listened, and then, reaching a candle off the table, he signed Mr. Wilkins to close the door. And Mr. Wilkins obeyed, and looked with an intensity of eagerness almost amounting to faintness on the experiment, and yet he could not hope. The flame was steady—steady and pitilessly unstirred, even when it was adjusted close to mouth and nostril; the head was raised up by one of Dixon's stalwart arms, while he held the candle in the other hand. Ellinor fancied that there was some trembling on Dixon's part, and grasped his wrist tightly in order to give it the requisite motionless firmness.

All in vain. The head was placed again on the cushions, the servant rose and stood by his master, looking sadly on the dead man, whom, living, none of them had liked or cared for, and Ellinor sat on, quiet and tearless, as one in a trance.

"How was it, father?" at length she asked.

He would fain have had her ignorant of all, but so questioned by her lips, so adjured by her eyes, in the very presence of death, he could not choose but speak the truth; he spoke it in convulsive gasps, each sentence an effort:

"He twunted me—he was insolent, beyond my patience—I could not bear it. I struck him—I can't tell how it was. He must have hit his head in falling. Oh, my God! one little hour ago I was innocent of this man's blood!" He covered his face with his hands.

Ellinor took the candle again; kneeling behind Mr. Dunster's head, she tried the futile experiment once more.

"Could not a doctor do some good?" she asked of Dixon, in a low hopeless voice.

"No!" said he, shaking his head, and looking with a sidelong glance at his master, who seemed to shrivel up and to shrink away at the bare suggestion. "Doctors can do nought, I'm afeared. All that a doctor could do, I take it, would be to open a vein, and that I could do along with the best of them, if I had but my fleam here." He fumbled in his pockets as he spoke, and, as chance would have it, the "fleam" (or cattle-lancet) was somewhere about his dress. He drew it out, smoothed and tried it on his finger. Ellinor tried to bare the arm, but turned sick as she did so. Her father started eagerly forwards, and did what was necessary with hurried,

trembling hands. If they had cared less about the result, they might have been more afraid of the consequences of the operation in the hands of one so ignorant as Dixon. But, vein or artery, it signified little; no living blood gushed out; only a little watery moisture followed the cut of the fleam. They laid him back on his strange sad death-couch. Dixon spoke next.

"Master Ned!" said he—for he had known Mr. Wilkins in his days of bright careless boyhood, and almost was carried back to them by the sense of charge and protection which the servant's presence of mind and sharpened senses gave him over his master on this dreary night—"Master Ned! we must do summut."

No one spoke. What was to be done?

"Did any folk see him come here?" Dixon asked, after a time. Ellinor looked up to hear her father's answer, a wild hope coming into her mind that all might be concealed, somehow; she did not know how, nor did she think of any consequences save of saving her father from the vague dread trouble and punishment that she was aware would await him if all were known.

Mr. Wilkins did not seem to hear; in fact, he did not hear anything but the unspoken echo of his own last words, that went booming through his heart:

"An hour ago I was innocent of this man's blood! Only an hour ago!"

Dixon got up and poured out half a tumblerful of raw spirit from the brandy-bottle that stood on the table.

"Drink this, Master Ned!" putting it to his master's lips. "Nay"—to Ellinor—"it will do him no harm; only bring back his senses, which, poor gentleman! are scared away. We shall need all our wits. Now, sir, please to answer my question. Did any one see Measter Dunster come here?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Wilkins, recovering his speech. "It all seems in a mist. He offered to walk home with me; I did not want him. I was almost rude to him to keep him off. I did not want to talk of business; I had taken too much wine to be very clear, and some things at the office were not quite in order, and he had found it out. If any one heard our conversation, they must know I did not want him to come with me. Oh! why would he come? He was as obstinate—he would come—and here it has been his death!"

"Well, sir, what's done can't be undone, and I'm sure we'd any of us bring him back to life if we could, even by cutting off our hands, though he was a mighty plaguy chap while he'd breath in him. But what I'm thinking is this: it will, maybe, go awkward with you, sir, if he is found here. One can't say. But don't you think, miss, that, as he's neither kith nor kin to miss him, we might just bury him away before morning, somewhere? There's better nor four hours of dark. I wish we could put him in the churchyard, but that can't be; but to my mind, the sooner we set about digging a place for him to lie in, poor

fellow, and the better it will be for us all in the end. I can pare a piece of turf up where it will never be missed, and if master will take one spade, and I another, why, we'll lay him softly down, and cover him up, and no one will be the wiser."

There was no reply from either for a minute or so. Then Mr. Wilkins said:

"If my father could have known of my living to this! Why, they will try me as a criminal; and you, Ellinor! Dixon, you are right. We must conceal it, or I must cut my throat, for I never could live through it. One minute of passion, and my life blasted!"

"Come along, sir," said Dixon; "there's no time to lose." And they went out in search of tools; Ellinor following them, shivering all over, but begging that she might be with them, and not have to remain in the study with—

She would not be bidden into her own room; she dreaded inaction and solitude. She made herself busy with carrying heavy baskets of turf, and straining her strength to the utmost; fetching all that was wanted, with soft swift steps.

Once, as she passed near the open study door, she thought that she heard a rustling, and a flash of hope came across her. Could he be reviving? She entered, but a moment was enough to deceive her; it had only been a night rustle among the trees. Of hope, life, there was none.

They dug the hole deep and well; working with fierce energy to quench thought and remorse. Once or twice her father asked for brandy, which Ellinor, reassured by the apparently good effect of the first dose, brought to him without a word; and once at her father's suggestion she brought food, such as she could find in the dining-room without disturbing the household, for Dixon.

When all was ready for the reception of the body in its unblest grave, Mr. Wilkins bade Ellinor go up to her room—she had done all she could to help them; the rest must be done by them alone. She felt that it must; and indeed both her nerves and her bodily strength were giving way. She would have kissed her father, as he sat wearily at the head of the grave—Dixon had gone in to make some arrangement for carrying the corpse—but he pushed her away quietly, but resolutely:

"No, Nelly, you must never kiss me again; I am a murderer."

"But I will, my own darling papa," said she, throwing her arms passionately round his neck, and covering his face with kisses. "I love you, and I don't care what you are, if you were twenty times a murderer, which you are not; I am sure it was only an accident."

"Go in, my child, go in, and try to get some rest. But go in, for we must finish as fast as we can. The moon is down; it will soon be daylight. What a blessing there are no rooms on one side of the house. Go, Nelly." And she went; straining herself up to move noiselessly, with eyes averted, through the room which she shud-

dered at as the place of hasty and unhallowed death.

Once in her own room she bolted the door on the inside, and then stole to the window, as if some fascination impelled her to watch all the proceedings to the end. But her aching eyes could hardly penetrate through the thick darkness, which, at the time of the year of which I am speaking, so closely precedes the dawn. She could discern the tops of the trees against the sky, and could single out the well-known one, at a little distance from the stem of which the grave was made, in the very piece of turf over which so lately she and Ralph had had their merry little tea-making; and where her father, as she now remembered, had shuddered and shivered, as if the ground on which his seat had then been placed, was fateful and ominous to him.

Those below moved softly and quietly in all they did; but every sound had a significant and terrible interpretation to Ellinor's ears. Before they had ended, the little birds had begun to pipe out their gay *réveillé* to the dawn. Then doors closed, and all was profoundly still.

Ellinor threw herself, in her clothes, on the bed; and was thankful for the intense weary physical pain which took off something of the anguish of thought—anguish that she fancied from time to time was leading to insanity.

By-and-by the morning-cold made her instinctively creep between the blankets; and, once there, she fell into a dead heavy sleep.

STREET TERRORS.

GAROTTING is in some measure a new art; but London criminality has found expression in past times in forms equally alarming, and sometimes even more serious. Crime is subject to caprices of fashion, like other things. There are, indeed, certain good old solid villainies which abide from age to age, unaffected by any mutations of taste; but the eccentricities of ruffianism obey some law of change, which causes them to shift their external modes and aspects. Still, the gross amount of homicidal ferocity remains pretty much the same, or, if there be any difference, it is not to the disadvantage of this epoch. The contemporary literature of bygone periods depicts to us a series of London ill-guarded, ill-lighted, and teeming with violence and rascality. It may be interesting at the present moment to recal some features of those extinct conditions of metropolitan life.

Early in the thirteenth century, according to an old chronicler, it was "a common practice" for a company of a hundred or more to "make nightly invasions upon the houses of the wealthy, to the intent to rob them; and if they found any man stirring in the city within the night, that were not of their crew, they would presently murder him; insomuch that when night was come no man durst adventure to walk in the

streets." In the reign of Henry the Eighth, crime was so rife, that seventy-two thousand great thieves, petty thieves, and rogues, were hanged. This, of course, was for all England. What may have been the proportion for London, does not appear; for there were no tabulated police returns in the sixteenth century. But it must have been large. The annalist who records the fact, says that the king "seemed for a while greatly to have terrified the rest [i.e. of the rogues]; but since his death the number of them is so increased, that, except some better order be taken, or the law already made be executed, such as dwell in uplandish towns and little villages shall live but in small safety and rest." The Marching Watch, with its costly annual pageantry on the vigil of St. John the Baptist, apparently did but little service; and, on its abolition in 1569, in the reign of Elizabeth, "a substantial standing watch" was set on foot. We all know from Shakespeare's immortal photograph of constabulary life, in the persons of Dogberry, Verges, and Co., how utterly ineffective the London police was in his time; for, though he has placed those worthies in the streets of a Sicilian city, it is evident that the portraits were drawn from the night-guardians of our own metropolis. The same great pen has shown with equal vividness the class of ruffians swarming in the thoroughfares of London, and in the lonely outlying country roads. Ancient Pistol, Nym, Bardolph, and the rest of that marauding crew, are types, a little poetised, of the bullies and swash-bucklers of three hundred years ago. The town at that time possessed certain privileged spots, which, having been conventual sanctuaries in the Roman Catholic days, were still held sacred from the intrusion of the law, as far as debtors were concerned, and which, as a matter of course, became places of retreat and security for the most abandoned of both sexes. Such was Alsatia, occupying the ground adjacent to the present Bouverie-street, Fleet-street—a nest of chartered rascality and crime, which was not broken up until the reign of William the Third, and of which, as it existed under James the First, Sir Walter Scott has given a minute and dramatic description in the *Fortunes of Nigel*. From these centres of infamy, the ruffler, the cut-purse, and the cut-throat, would sally forth on their errands of mischief; and, if hard pressed in any encounter with such officers of justice as were then to be found, would retire, whenever it was possible, to the sanctuary, where the law was practically incapable of following them. It was in the precinct of Whitefriars, or Alsatia, that in the year 1612 two paid assassins of a Scotch nobleman, Lord Sanguhar, murdered at his own door a teacher of fencing, who, five years previously, had accidentally put out the patrician's eye at a bout with foils. Sanguhar and his agents escaped for a while, but were ultimately taken and hanged. Lord Bacon called this ignominious execution of the peer "the noblest piece of justice that ever came forth in any king's time;" and Coke says that he re-

ported the case in all its details "because this example hath not its parallel." The revenging of private quarrels in the open streets, however, was a common occurrence. In a letter from Mr. Gilbert Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury, dated February 13, 1578, and quoted in Lodge's *Illustrations*, an account is given of "one Wyndam, who shot at my Lord Rytche" while riding out; and of Lodowyke Grevell's attack on Sir John Conway, first with a cudgel, with which he stunned him, and then with a sword, as he lay senseless. The frequency of these outrages is shown by the fact that they were regarded with no more concern than the pistolling or bowie-knifeing of an obnoxious gentleman at the present day in a South Carolina hotel. The Earl of Shrewsbury's correspondent speaks of the two circumstances to which he alludes as "trifling matters." To Latimer, however, who in one of his sermons relates the murder by a London merchant of a man who had "displeased" him, such excesses appeared in their true light; and he relates with horror that the worst crimes were "winked at." The peace of the town, indeed, was threatened in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries not only by the professedly criminal classes, but by dissolute noblemen (who would quarrel over their wine, and fight in the taverns and ordinaries, or in the public ways), and by the young prentices, whose clubs were often a terror to more peaceable citizens. There were fifty dangers to be guarded against then, to every one which menaces us now; and bribery frequently interposed, to shield the offender from the punishment which was his due.

Matters were probably better under the strict, stern rule of Cromwell; but the accession of Charles the Second brought back a flood of vice and criminality, and rendered the streets of London even more perilous than they had been before. Rochester, Sedley, and the other profligate wits of the time, filled the town with the terror of their lawless exploits, and any man who had offended the great lords and courtiers might reckon on the certainty of maltreatment in passing by night from one part of the metropolis to another. It was thus that Rochester punished Dryden, as he walked home from Will's Coffee-house to his residence in Gerrard-street, Soho. Mr. Charles Knight, in his entertaining work on London, says that "this was a solitary case;" but he is mistaken. A still more disgraceful outrage, committed in the same reign, towards the close of 1670, with the connivance of the king himself, is mentioned in the histories, and more particularly recorded by Andrew Marvell in letters to his friends. Sir John Coventry, a member of parliament, made a jest in the House of Commons at the expense of Charles's morality. A few nights afterwards (it was a little before Christmas, and the night was long and probably dark), twenty-five of the Duke of Monmouth's troop and a few foot soldiers lay in wait for the imprudently bold orator, from ten p.m. to two in the morning, in Suffolk-street,

and, as he returned from the tavern where he supped to his own house, felled him, and nearly cut off the end of his nose, when the arrival of some other passengers struck them with terror, and they fled, or, as Marvell expresses it, "marched off." The writer adds, that "Sir Thomas Sands, lieutenant of the troop, commanded the party, and O'Brien, the Earl of Inchequin's son, was a principal actor." The circumstance created as great an outbreak of popular indignation as the murder committed by Lord Sanguinar had done in the reign of James. The court for a time tried to carry matters with a high hand, and the king actually ordered the release of two of the accomplices who had been taken; but, the night before the reassembling of parliament after the Christmas vacation, he permitted their fresh arrest. In this juncture, the House of Commons acted with great spirit and dignity. They at once voted that they would proceed to no business whatever (though Charles, as usual, was in dire want of money) until they had passed a bill for the surrender of the malefactors, and for augmenting the penalties for all such crimes committed on "parliament men" in the future. In another letter, Marvell calls this act "Sir John Coventry's bill against cutting noses." Sir Thomas Sands and O'Brien neglected to appear at the Old Bailey within the time limited by the act of parliament, and were accordingly attainted and outlawed, "without possibility of pardon."

The same admirable poet and patriot relates another piece of street ruffianism by royal and noble blacklegs, which occurred about the same period. "Doubtless you have heard before this time," he writes, "how Monmouth, Albemarle, Dunbane, and seven or eight gentlemen, fought with the watch, and killed a poor beadle. They have all got their pardons, for Monmouth's sake; but it is an act of great scandal." To "kill a poor beadle" was evidently a mere matter of sport and good-fellowship to the jovial monarch and his courtiers; and, as the beadle in question was not so fortunate as to be a member of the House of Commons, no bill was passed for attainting his murderers, and his blood remained unavenged. Lordly encounters with the watch lasted even to our own times; for the achievements of the Marquis Spring-heeled Jack are yet fresh in the recollection of many of us, though somewhat more than a quarter of a century has elapsed since those edifying days. But, had a policeman been murdered in 1837 by any titled reveller, we should infallibly have seen the illustrious culprit, first at the Old Bailey, and afterwards on a certain platform below the tower of St. Sepulchre's.

It was not until near the close of the seventeenth century that highway robberies in the neighbourhood of London became one of the institutions of the criminal class. Du Val seems to have been the originator of this most elegant of rascalities. He taught us clumsy islanders, according to Hudibras Butler, how to rob "more obligingly" than had been our wont,

And how to hang in a more graceful fashion
Than e'er was known before to the dull English nation.

After him came a host of Turpins and Tom Kings, whose deeds are not to the present purpose, inasmuch as they were not commonly performed in London streets, but on the dark roads, heaths, and commons, in the vicinity of town. The metropolitan ruffians, however, kept pace with their brethren of the country highways. To such a pitch of audacity had the former attained in the time of Queen Anne, that they positively conceived a design to stop her Majesty's coach as she returned from supping in the city. Those, too, were the days of the Mohocks—a set of desperate young bloods and men of fashion, who seem to have been desirous of emulating the drunken atrocities of Nero and his parasites, and of whom the Spectator has given us a fearful account, in his three hundred and twenty-fourth number, bearing date March 12, 1712. If what is there stated is to be accepted literally, the rakes of that time had formed themselves into "a nocturnal fraternity under the title of 'the Mohock Club,' a name borrowed, it seems, from a sort of cannibals in India, who subsist by plundering and devouring all the nations about them. An outrageous ambition of doing all possible hurt to their fellow-creatures is the great cement of their assembly, and the only qualification required in the members. In order to exert this principle in its full strength and perfection, they take care to drink themselves to a pitch that is beyond the possibility of attending to any notions of reason or humanity; then make a general sally, and attack all that are so unfortunate as to walk the streets through which they patrol. Some are knocked down, others stabbed, others cut and carbonadoed. The particular talents by which these misanthropes are distinguished from one another consist in the various kinds of barbarities which they execute upon their prisoners. Some are celebrated for a happy dexterity in tipping the lion upon them; which is performed by squeezing the nose flat to the face, and boring out the eyes with their fingers. Others are called the dancing-masters, and teach their scholars to cut capers by running swords through their legs; a new invention, whether originally French I cannot tell." In number three hundred and thirty-two of the Spectator, a Mohock hunt is described. The victim was run down with a view-hallo! when the savage pack formed a circle round him with the points of their swords. One punctured him in the rear, which naturally made him wheel about; then came a prick from a second, a third, and so on. Thus they kept him spinning like a top, until, in their mercy, they let him go free. Another savage diversion was thrusting women into barrels, and rolling them down Snow or Ludgate hill. Swift, who was horribly afraid of the Mohocks, mentions several of their villanies. He writes to Stella on the 16th March, 1712: "Two of the Mohocks caught a maid of old Lady Winchelsea's at the door of her house in the Park with a candle,

and had just lighted out somebody. They cut all her face, and beat her without any provocation." Next day he added: "They go on still and cut people's faces every night! but they shan't cut mine;—I like it better as it is."

These street ruffians took various strange designations. At the Restoration, they were Muns and Tityre-Tus; then, Hectors and Scourers; later still, Nickers (whose delight it was to smash windows with showers of half-pence), Hawkabites, and, lastly, Mohocks.

Johnson, in his poem on London, published in 1738, paints a no less frightful picture of the midnight streets. In that masterly style which attracted the attention of Pope to the then obscure young writer, and made him prophesy that he would soon be unearthed, the satirist describes the rakes of that time as

Lords of the street and terrors of the way,
and exclaims:

Prepare for death if here at night you roam,
And sign your will before you sup from home.
Some fiery fop, with new commission vain,
Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man,
Some frolic drunkard, reeling from a feast,
Provokes a broil, and stabs you for a jest.

Street ruffianism had grown to such dimensions in 1744, that the Lord Mayor and aldermen presented an address to the king, calling attention to the frequency of robberies and murders in the most public and frequented thoroughfares, and that "at such times as were heretofore deemed hours of security." George, in his reply, said he would set the laws vigorously to work; but it was many years before the town was brought into anything like a state of security. In the London Magazine for October, 1752, it is reported that the Common Council of the City had just agreed to the demolition of the wall parting Upper from Middle Moorfields. The reason for this is stated to be that the wall had for a long time been "a great nuisance to the neighbourhood, as it was a screen for thieves and the most obnoxious persons." Gay advises the passenger, for a similar reason, to take care of the great open desert of Lincoln's Inn-fields, which boasted no garden then as it does now:

Where Lincoln's Inn, wide space, is rail'd around,
Cross not with venturous step; there oft is found
The lurking thief, who, while the daylight shone,
Made the walls echo with his begging tone.
That crutch which late compassion moved shall wound

Thy bleeding head, and fell thee to the ground.

The poet proceeds to warn his readers against trusting the linkman, especially "along the lonely wall." He would quench his flambeau in the middle passage, hand you into the power of some gang of thieves, and share the booty when all was over. In 1747, a murder of a singularly atrocious and deliberate nature was committed in another part of the town. The Monthly Chronologer of the London Magazine of that year records the following incident, under date Wednesday, September 23:

"This night, about ten o'clock, as Captain Joseph Johns, of Prescott-street, was going home, he was attacked by two fellows in Cavendish-court, near Devonshire-square, who knocked him down, and almost cut off his nose, robbed him of his watch and two seals, and then made off; upon which the captain called out 'Stop thief!' and immediately one of them returned, stabbed him in the right breast with a sword, which went through his body, and stuck in his backbone, whereby it broke, and then made off undiscovered. The next night, at eleven, one Lopez, a Jew, was taken at a house in Petticoat-lane, for the said robbery. John Basden, a constable, with his assistants, went in quest of him to a public-house in that lane. Upon their entrance, a pistol was fired, which shot the constable in his left breast, so that his life was despaired of; and one of the watchmen was almost killed by a bludgeon. The master of the house was afterwards secured, and committed to the Compter. There are eighteen persons in this gang, and warrants are out for apprehending them. Mr. Richardson, the City Marshal, being informed of the above unhappy accident, immediately went and assembled a parcel of watchmen with him, to go in quest of these villains, when they found a large gang of thieves assembled in Gravel-lane, who, immediately upon seeing him, fired, but luckily missed him; and, though most of the watchmen ran away, yet he rushed in amongst them, and secured one of the persons charged with the robbery of Captain Johns, and brought him off, who was committed for further examination. The Marshal afterwards secured two other persons suspected to be concerned in the above robbery." Captain Johns died three nights after the attack; and the Jew was tried and hanged for the murder.

This certainly exceeds the worst of our garrotte outrages, and the case was not an exceptional one. It was an age when the law showed a great deal of vindictiveness, but very little real power; when thief-takers like Jonathan Wild first educated their victims to the subtleties of crime, and then betrayed them to the gallows; when executions were so common that they could not have possessed any terrors for the lawless; when street riots were of frequent occurrence, and when the mob possessed an organisation far more effective and formidable than that of the government and the magistracy. Even as late as 1780, the No Popery rioters kept London for a week in the condition of a town taken by assault and sacked. An unknown writer in the World (1754) speaks of the numerous robberies and murders at that time occurring in the metropolis, from which the provinces appear to have been comparatively free, and attributes them to a cause which to our modern ears sounds sufficiently ludicrous—viz. to "the overgrown size of London, affording infinite receptacles to sharpers, thieves, and villains of all kinds." He actually proposes that the extent of the capital should be limited by act of parliament, and that the houses in certain "back parts of the town" (such as Hockley-in-the

Hole) should be purchased by the State, with a view to re-converting them into fields! He would be surprised to see the London of to-day, of which Hockley-in-the-Hole is almost the centre. Some of his remarks, however, tally very much with what we are now thinking and saying on the great question as to how we shall deal with our criminals. He refutes the idea, then almost universal, that severe punishments in all cases were necessary, and shows that the effect of excessive rigour is only to make rogues more desperate. And, speaking of transportation, he observes that men whose minds are thoroughly corrupted rarely reform, and that, on returning from transportation, they "fall immediately into the same company and profligate course of life as before." These truths were again pointed out nearly half a century later by Dr. Colquhoun, who, in his admirable Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis, published in 1796, did much towards the creation of more humane ideas in criminal jurisprudence, and of a more vigorous administration of the restraining powers of the law. His work contains a foreshadowing of the system of police introduced by Sir Robert Peel three-and-thirty years later; and in these remarkable words (having first stated the criminal classes, convicted or suspected, at eleven thousand nine hundred and thirty-four) he suggests an ameliorating influence which has only recently been embodied in the creation of reformatories and societies for the assistance of discharged convicts:

"Without friends, without character, and without the means of subsistence, what are these unhappy mortals to do? They are no sooner known or suspected than they are avoided. No person will employ them, even if they were disposed to return to the paths of honesty, unless they make use of fraud and deception, by concealing that they have been the inhabitants of a prison or of the hulks. At large upon the world, without food or raiment, and with the constant calls of nature upon them for both; without a home or an asylum to shelter them from the inclemency of the weather—what is to become of them?" [These italics are the author's own, and show the emphasis with which he desired to place this important part of the problem before the public mind.] "The police of the country has provided no place of industry in which those who were disposed to reform might find subsistence in return for labour, which, in their present situation, becomes useless to them, because no person will purchase it by employing them. That man will deserve a statue to his memory who shall devise and carry into effect a plan for the employment of discharged convicts who may be desirous of labouring for their subsistence in an honest way." The doctor's main position is that, whereas "robbery and theft, as well in houses as on the roads, have long been reduced to a regular system," the powers of the police should be systematised too, and that we should not be satisfied with merely stringing up a score of miserable wretches every morning in front of Newgate. It took a long time before either

the government or the public would listen to him.

The street outrages of the present century have not been so numerous as those of the preceding; but they have at times been bad enough. The "Corinthians" of the days of George the Fourth revived, in some degree, the dissolute brutalities of their predecessors, the Mohocks; and little more than thirty years ago London was in a panic terror—and not without reason—at the homicidal feats performed at night in the public ways, according to the example of Burke, the great Edinburgh professor of the art of murdering with pitch-plasters. "Burking" was literally the Newgate fashion of the time; but, after a while, it went out, and other things arose and had their day. Now, it was "hocussing" with laudanum; now, stupifying with chloroform. The fate of the Spanish-Yankee Fillbuster, Lopez, in the first Great Exhibition year, after his attempt on Cuba, seems to have given a new idea to our English footpads, of which, however, they did not avail themselves as quickly as might have been expected from gentlemen of their ingenuity. The Spaniards "garrotted" Lopez, and our newspapers described the process and naturalised the word. We knew nothing of garrotting before the autumn of 1851; in that of 1856 we were in a panic almost equal to the excitement we have recently passed through.

Daniel Defoe, writing in 1729 on this ever-present subject of street insecurity, suggests a plan by which the public thoroughfares would be "strongly guarded" and "gloriously illuminated." In those two phrases he certainly hit upon the great desiderata, and both have been comparatively supplied in modern times. But something still remains to be done. Our police force seems hardly strong enough to cope with the enormous mass of crime continually augmenting itself in the metropolis; and it may fairly be asked whether, in these early-closing times, we have a reasonable amount of light in the streets after sunset. The evil-doer dreads light more than he dreads the policeman. It is said that burglars will not enter a house the windows of which are lit up. The footpad has an equal terror of that all-beholding and all-revealing eye. People who recollect the time when London was illuminated with nothing better than oil-lamps, are naturally disposed to regard the present system as almost supernatural; but the children of a later generation, who have no such standard of comparison, must judge by the simple fact whether or not there is sufficient light for the purposes of convenience and safety. Tried by that test, the result is not satisfactory. Even in the best thoroughfares there is scarcely light enough, after the shops are closed, to see the wayfarer across the road clear of the cabs and horses. In the poorer ways, it is little more than darkness made visible. If our memory do not deceive us, there has been of late a deterioration in the amount of artificial light supplied to Londoners.

Every now and then the parishes quarrel with the gas companies on a question of price, and the public suffer while the garotters gain. St. Pancras had a feud of this kind some years ago, and for a while lit up with the sleepy old oil-burners, or with naphtha. But whether or not the supply of gas now is less per lamp than it was formerly, and whether or not the gas, as some assert, is diluted, it is certain that we do not get as much illumination as we want. Science has recently discovered many wonderful lights, at once powerful and cheap; can it not utilise them for the benefit of the community? Or is the gas monopoly too strong? At present the discoveries are employed for little else than to adorn a scientific lecture at the Polytechnic, or a show scene at the theatre. May we not hope to see them brought down to the level of ordinary human needs? The garotter lurks unseen in the gloom of some archway, or prowls under the shadow of a dead wall, ready to spring out as soon as his victim's back is presented to him. With a searching light in every road, street, alley, and archway, half his occupation would be gone; for there is no waiting until *that* watchman is at another part of the beat, and the ruffian is always discouraged when he can see to do his work.

BEFORE THE TRIAL BY COMBAT.

THE doleful wind around around
The turret, trying to enter here,
Whines low, while down in the court-yard drear
The great bloodhound, to the flint fast bound,
Is baying the moon. The moon is clear
And dismal-cold: for a filmy tear,
Whose cat's-foot falls with no more sound
Than an eyelid that sinks on a sick man's sward,
Is lord of her light, whereby to-night
He walketh alone on the frozen mere
From the wood whence he cometh anear, anear.
Ever about the setting in
Of the darkness, now for a month or more,
The things on the gusty arras 'gin
To rustle and creep and mope and grin
At me, still sitting as heretofore
This last sad night (no whit less calm
Than when first he accused me a month before),
With elbow based on knee, and palm
Upslanted, propping a moody chin;
The better to watch with a glassy eye
The dull red embers drop and lie
Forlorn of a lurid inner light,
Like days burn'd out by a deadly sin.
I marvel much if my mind be right,
All seems so wondrous calm within
This long o'er-laboured heart, in spite
Of the howling wind and the hideous night,
And to-morrow that bringeth the final fight
When all is to lose or win.

What matter the end, so it be near?
I can only think of how last year
We rode together, she and I:
She in scarlet and I in green,
Across the oak-wood dark and high,
Whose wicked leaves shut out the sky,
Which, had I seen, that had not been,
I think, which makes me fear to die
And meet her there. I could not bear

Her dead face e'en. Who else, I ween,
Should hardly shrink from Gysbrecht's eye,
For all his vaunting, not so keen,
The too-soon boasting braggart (ay,
Even when he strode before the Queen
And three times charged me with the lie!),
As my keen axe. More glad that day
She was, sure, than 'tis good to be,
Lest some that cannot be so glad
As she was then should chance go mad
Trying to laugh. Oh, all the way
She laughed so loud that even the wood
Laugh'd too. She seem'd so sure, that day,
That life is sweet and God is good.
I could not laugh, because her hood
Had fallen back, and so let stray
Of all her long hair's loveliness
A single shining yellow tress
Across her shoulder; which made me
(That could not choose, poor fool! but see)
More sad, I think, than men should be
When women laugh. The wood, I say,
Laugh'd with her, at me, all the way.
Once, too, her palfrey, while we rode,
Started aside, and in alarm
She lean'd her hand upon my arm;
Whose light touch did so overload
My heavy heart, that I believe,
Had she a moment longer so
Lean'd on me, from my saddle-bow
I must have dropp'd down dead. Near eve
We came out on the other land.
And I remember that I said,
"How still and lone the land is here!"
She only look'd, and shook her head,
And, looking, laugh'd still louder, and
Said, laughing loudly, "What's to fear?"
The accursed echo, that low lay
Under that lonesome land, I knew
For want of aught more wise to say,
Shriek'd "Fear!" and fell a-laughing too.
Deep melancholy meadow-grass,
Which never any man had mown,
So long our horses scarce could pass
Among it, all about was grown
For some bad purpose of its own
Up to the edge of the grey sky.
And underneath a stream ran by:
A little stream, that made great moan,
Half mad with pain, the Fiend knows why;
"Twixt stupid heaps of helpless stone,
That chose upon its path to lie,
It push'd and dash'd at desperate pace,
In extreme haste to get away.
The owls might fly about by day
For all the sky, there, had to say;
Which took no care to change its face
To any other hue but grey,
Having to light up such a place.
But for the moan of that mad stream,
All things were dumb, resign'd, and still,
And strange, as things are in a dream.
The whole land self-surrender'd lay,
And let harsh Nature work her will,
For lack of strength to answer nay
To any sort of wrong or ill
That chose to vex it. Laughing gay
Into that lonesome land rode she.
The grass above her palfrey's knee
Was long and green as green could be.
She, laughing as she rode, 'gan trill
Some canzonet or vine lay,
It matter'd little, good or ill,

Whate'er the song, if any way
It eased her heart of laughter shrill.
Of trees were only black-thorns three,
Low-clump'd upon the ugly hill,
Like witches when, to watch the weather,
They crook their backs and squat together.

We lighted down beneath those trees,
Where to did I our horses tether;
And on a 'ough I hung my shield.
She went up higher in the field,
And down her long limbs laid at ease
In the deep grass; which up and down,
Wave after wave of green heaved over
Her bright gold-border'd scarlet gown;
And all but her small face did cover.
For she, propp'd slant upon her arm,
Look'd thro' it sideways with a charm
To catch me; while, now forwards, now
Backwards she swung with saucy brow
Her gold curls, like a gorgeous snake
That lifts and leans on lolling fold,
A lustrous head, but half awake
From winter dreams when, coy and cold,
The Spring wind stirs about the brake.
She call'd me to her thro' the grass:
She call'd me "Friend;" she said I was
"Her Ritter of the rueful face:
But I," she said, "am never sad."
Therewith she laugh'd. The hateful place
Laugh'd too: resolved to make me mad.
I went, and sat beside her there,
And gazed upon her glittering hair.
Musing, I said, "Twill soon be night;
Night must be very lonely here."
She look'd at me, and laugh'd outright,
And, laughing, answer'd, "What's to fear?"
But "Fear!" the echo, laughing light,
Still added. It was hard to bear.
Long sat I silent in her sight,
Much musing. When I spoke at last
If what I meant to say I said
I do not know—for there was pass'd
Like burning lead, about my head
And on my brain, a heavy pain,
And "Oh," I cried, "if it would rain,
And bring some change!"—Yet this I know,
That, soon as I had ended, she
Look'd thro' her glittering hair at me,
Full in my face, and laugh'd again,
And answer'd "Never! let this be
A thing forgot between us twain."
So, back beneath the black-thorn tree,
Where my shield hung, I went away
A little while, and sat apart.
I could not speak: I could not pray:
I thought it was because my heart
Was in my throat—it choked me so!
But now the devil's claw, I know,
It was, that would not let me go;
Me by the throat so fast he had.
Enough! You think that I went mad?
By no means. I grew strong and wise,
Went back, look'd boldly in her eyes,
And stopp'd her laughing. O, at length
I stood up in a sudden strength,
And all the laughing stopp'd. 'Twas she,
Not I, that trembled. I could see
The woman was afraid of me.
She crouch'd and cower'd about my feet
Flat on the grass. For she mistook
My meaning, and began to entreat
My pardon with a piteous look.
Then I laughed long and loud. 'Tis strange,

She did not laugh this time. The change
Was come upon her: and I knew
That she was all mine thro' and thro',
Whatever I might choose to do.
Mine, from the white brow's hiding-place
Under the roots of golden hair
That glitter'd round her frighten'd face;
Mine, from the warmth and odour there
Down to the tender feet that were
Mine too to guess in each great fold
Of scarlet bound about with gold.
So I grew dainty with my pleasure,
And, as a miser counts the treasure,
His heart is loth to spend too fast,
So did my eye take note and measure
Of all my new-gain'd wealth. At last
The Fiend, impatient to be gone,
Brought this to end.

When all was done,
I seem'd to know what was to be,
And how 'twould fare henceforth with me,
Who must ride home now all alone:
I knew that I should never see
The face of God, nor ever hear
Her laugh again. And so it was.
Yet 'twas not mine, that blow, I swear.
Nor did I know it, till the grass
Was red and wet. When Gysbrecht tries
To charge me with that deed, he lies!
And lies! and lies! Who could have guess'd
That she had hidden in her breast,
Or in her girdle (what know I?),
A dagger? Did she mean to die
Always,—even when she seem'd so proud,
So sure of life? Ay, when so loud
She laugh'd that day? I only know
I would have given these two hands,
The moment I beheld her so,
Ay, all my lordships, all my lands,
If but on me had fall'n that blow,
Not her. Oh what were Hell's worst pain
If I might hear her laugh again?

It must have been an hour or more
I think (it seem'd an age) before
I, sitting there beside her still
And listening, heard a sound of rain
In the three black-thorns on the hill.
"Too late it comes," I thought, "and vain,
For nothing here will change now." Chill
The evening grew. A wet wind blew
About the billowy grass. I thought
"How cold she will be here all night
In this wet meadow!" Then I caught
At the tall grass, and heap'd and mass'd
Great handfuls of it, which I cast
Over her feet, and on her face;
But first drew down her scarlet gown
Over her limbs composed and meek
In great calm folds; and, o'er her cheek,
Smooth'd the bright hair; and all the place
Where the black redness oozed, I hid
With heaps of grass. All this I did
Quite quietly, as a mother might
Put her sick child to sleep. It was night,
Ere I had ended. A dull moon
Across the smearing rain reveal'd
A melancholy light, and soon
Began to peer about the field
To find what still the fresh grass kept
Well hidden. Then I think I crept
Down to the little stream; and stood
A long while looking at the wood,
Wondering what ever I should do.

There was a spot of blood I knew
Upon my hand. I did not dare
To wash it, lest the water there
Too far away the stain should bear,
And so make all the world aware
Of what was done.

The cock crows—hark!

Before his time sure. Deep in dark
The drowsy land is lying yet.
Yon frosty cloud hides up the moon,
But I am sure she is not set.
To-morrow? Is it come so soon?
Well, let it come! A hundred eyes
Can make no worse the eyes I scorn.
For in his throat Count Gysbrecht lies,
And on his body am I sworn
To prove the same this very morn.
Let Kaiser Henry range his state,
To mark the issue of my fate,
The lords of every Landgrave
From Rhine to Rhône, with looks elate,
Like gods between the earth and sky,
May crowd each golden balcony.
Come, Kaiser, call the fight!
Let the great trumpet blare on high
As tho' the Judgment Angel blew
The blast that bids the wicked rue;
Now, Gysbrecht, to the lists, and smite
Thy very worst! I reck not, I,
Not tho' the dead should come to sight,
Nor tho' a hundred heralds cry,
"On! God maintain the right!"

FROM THE LIFE OF HORACE VERNET

"WELL, I should think he would paint your portrait for about twenty sous—perhaps for less, if he hasn't much to do—but you must beat him down. If he asks twenty-five sous, offer him twenty. If he says twenty, offer him fifteen, and he'll take eighteen. You remember his address?"

"Oui, mon capitaine."

"First large house near the palace. Go up to the first floor and ring the bell. Now, right about face, and mind you are back to drill."

This was the answer I gave Grosjean, a recruit who inquired of me "Where he could have his picture done?" He asked me to direct him to a rather tip-top artist, and said he was willing to pay liberally. So I mischievously thought of Horace Vernet, that great French painter who was one of the first of leaders among men struck by death in this year sixty-three, and sent him a patron.

Horace Vernet had points of independence that led him to be considered by innocent people who knew nothing of his ways rather daft. One day, for example, one of my men came to barracks with about a dozen glasses of wine too many in him. The most experienced un-military eye could not have detected it, for the old fellow is a twelve years' service man. He stood upright as a lamp-post, and at parade went through every movement commanded with the nicest precision. But it was that very uprightness and precision which revealed to me that Monsieur Giroux was not in his normal state. Besides which, he had a quid in his mouth, and we never allow that in the ranks.

After observing him "right about face" (as if he were a piece of clockwork) several times, I felt convinced that he was drunk, and, going up to him, said: "Giroux, you are drunk!" "Yes, mon capitaine." "You are chewing!" "N—no, mon capitaine." Down his throat went the quid. "Where have you been drinking?" "At the infantry canteen." "Who gave you the money?" "A civilian." "What for?" "For looking at the fountains." "Oh! how much did he give you?" "Two francs." "How long did you look at the fountains?" "Half an hour." "And what did the civilian do?" In an incoherent jumble I understood: "Walked up and down looking at me—told me to move about and admire—then, all of a sudden, rushed up to me and said, as if he were commanding, 'By your right; don't move! there, so!'" "Well?" "Then he took out his pocket-book and took down my regimental number. I suppose; so, seeing that, I gave it him, 1248—I hadn't done anything—so he may report me if he likes—he offered me the money, and I took it—who cares for him?" "Well, well, that'll do—go to bed."

I guessed that Vernet had been treating him, so I said nothing about it. One day Vernet stopped a sapper just as he was putting a petit verre to his lips, and kept him in that position for a quarter of an hour. Fancy the old trooper, dry and thirsty, with the aromatic drop just under his nose. Another day, at a review, he shouted to a dragoon that he'd give him a hundred francs if he would stop in a certain position for five minutes only! The man was just going head over heels off his horse, and got a regular cropper. Vernet painted from life; when possible, from life in activity outside his studio. He roamed about Versailles Park, the cavalry and infantry barracks, and there picked up attitudes and groups of soldiery. Hence the vivacity of all his military tableaux.

Well, we were garrisoned at Versailles, and recruit Grosjean had asked me, his captain, to direct him to a tip-top artist. Grosjean, although but a recruit, is a fine soldier-like looking fellow. He has a splendid beak nose, high forehead, heavy moustache, and broad shoulders. As he asked me the question, it struck me that he was a fine subject for Vernet, so I sent him, knowing that at all events he would offer his twenty sous for a portrait in a way that would amuse the genial Horace. Grosjean wanted his portrait for his mother. All recruits in our army, when they are well shaken into their uniforms, have a picture "done" of themselves, and send it to their parents. There are in all garrison towns certain fellows, calling themselves artists, who keep a stock of lithographed pictures of all the troops of France—that is, of all the hundred odd regiments. These lithographs are plain, and drawn in outline only. When a man wants his portrait to send home, he inquires for an artist of his comrades, or sergeant, or of an officer. The comrades proclaim as the tip-top artist that one who uses the most brilliant colours, and who lavishes on his portraits the most liberal quantity

of golden ornaments. If an artist wishes to establish a great reputation among the soldiery, the best thing he can do is to ornament each of his patrons as he would a field-marshal. They rarely patronise the photographer, perhaps because his works are too truthful. The soldier having listened to the merits of different artists, selects the one whom he will patronise, and in full dress pays him an official visit. The painter receives him with every sign of high consideration, draws from a folio a lithograph, which he hides carefully from the eyes of his patron—a lancer, if the man be a lancer; or a cuirassier, if the man be a cuirassier. He poses his subject in a graceful position, answering to that of the figure in the lithograph, and proceeds then to fill in the colours. The consequence is, that if fifty dragoons have their portraits painted, the fifty will all be in one attitude. If, however, there be twenty blonds, twenty will resemble one another as peas do peas, and all the dark ones will appear to the inexperienced eye a band of brothers. But as the shepherd learns the physiognomy of sheep, so it is that amongst themselves the men will select the portrait of any man in particular, although the pictures are all printed from one stone. For, in each picture there is some distinctive mark. One man will insist upon having a cigar in his mouth; the artist is obliged to comply with his wishes—another wants his sword out of the sheath, in his right hand. This is rather an awkward job, for the hero of the lithography has already a sword by his side; however, to oblige a customer, it must be managed. A knife erases the hilt over the scabbard, and a drawn sword is represented in the hero's hand. When this is done, the man certainly generally looks as if he were violating all the laws of war, and offering his sword for sale! He seems to say to the spectator, "It is yours for twopenny." Another man not approving of the scarlet tint of his trousers, suggests that they should be painted pink; another, that his coat should be changed from dark olive to a bright emerald green, or from Prussian blue to ultra-marine. In all cases the artist is most amiable; and if he gets but his twenty sous, offers his customers a choice of all the colours of the rainbow. Actually, then, these pictures, if they do not give the physical proportions of each subject, generally represent some idiosyncrasy which marks the original. Grosjean, desiring to be handsomely painted, rigged himself out in gala dress, twisted his moustache into wiry "crops," and wended his way through Versailles to the artists studio. If, as he ascended the grand staircase of polished oak, he had any doubts whether a painter living in such a mansion would do him a portrait for a franc, the fact of my having given him the address would have sufficed to reassure him; for, to a good French soldier, his captain is infallible. The captain of a troop serves to his soldiers in lieu of father, mother, banker, friend, and often spiritual adviser. If the captain says a thing is so or so, that settles it.

Grosjean pulled the bell-rope on the first

landing, and, with a patronising air, asked a gentleman who opened the door, for M. Horace Vernet?

"Yes, my friend, it is here." "Is he at home?" "Yes, I am he." "Oh! do you make pictures?" "Sometimes, my friend." "How much do you ask for a portrait?" "A portrait? What do you want with a portrait, my friend?" "That's my affair. I'll pay for it." "Oh! who recommended you to me?" "Why, I have heard of your talents, and—I thought you might as well do it as anybody else." "Thank you. Come in, mon ami. Do you know my charges—or thereabouts?" "Yes. I suppose fifteen or twenty sous—that is, with lots of gold ornament, twenty sous, eh?" "Hum!"

Vernet, with a good-natured smile on his face, showed the dragoon into his studio, where was his grand picture of the "Taking of the Smahla of Abd-el-Kader," finished on an easel.

"Twenty sous? that's very little, my friend!"

"The usual price, I believe." "Not with lots of gold ornament?" "Oh yes, I've seen some you've done for other fellows." "Have you now?" "Yes; now, monsieur, I don't like bargaining; I see by this picture that you paint well. Will you do it for twenty sous, gold and all?" "Make it twenty-five." "No, twenty." "How do you want it done?" "Full dress, as I am." "With the helmet on?" "Of course." "Then it's impossible! Not under twenty-five." "Why?" "Why? just think, mon ami, that red horse-hair tail on your helmet would take at least five sous' worth of vermilion—and vermilion has risen in price."

"Well, I don't so much care about the helmet; but you'll do the spurs in gold?" "Yes; the spurs." "And a gold hilt to the sword?"

"Also." "Very well, monsieur, consider it as an order; shall I pay you anything in advance?" "Oh, by no means. See whether you like your picture first, and if you don't I'll do you another." "Oh, very well; but I forgot to tell you, don't put me in the same position as all the other fellows. Draw me something like this! As if I were leading on to an attack." "But that will cost more." "Why?" "Because

there is more work, and it will take more paint. You see, when your sword is in its scabbard, it is only one thing to paint—only the hilt and the sheath; but when you draw your sword, I must paint the hilt, the scabbard, and the blade." "Well, there's something in that; but look here, never mind that, I'll give you twenty-two sous. There!" "It is a bargain, then," said Vernet; "come the day after to-morrow."

"Why not do me now?" "Oh! for twenty-two sous I want to do you somewhat stylish, and I must get some new colours." "Very well; don't do it like that chasseur d'Afrique in the big picture here; the colours are so dull. There's no brilliancy in them—there is a something wanting." "Yes, yes, no doubt; that's a cheap picture I've done for the Museum here."

Horace Vernet, relating this part of the adventure, says he never enjoyed an order so much

in his life, not even his first one; the little patronising air of the trooper, and his would-be connoisseur-like remarks about the big picture, amused him immensely. He had a careful look at the particular *chasseur d'Afrique* whom Grosjean had pointed out; and indeed he was going to add a little brilliancy, when he suddenly reflected that the man represented was in a cloud of smoke and dust, calculated to diminish the effect of the colours, and so left his work as it was.

At drill, Grosjean answered my inquiry as to his portrait with a knowing wink, which conveyed his belief that he had proved too much for the artist. "He asked me twenty-five sous, captain, and he's going to do it for twenty-two, gold and all," he said to me. I congratulated him upon his success, and had to restrain him during the rest of sword exercise, for he would fancy at odd times that he was sitting for his portrait; and throwing himself into all kinds of heroic, forlorn-hope attitudes, which if they were picturesque, were at all events not according to regulation.

Horace Vernet would have been invaluable as a detective draughtsman; if he once had a good look at a man, he could from memory produce a striking likeness. It was a happy knack he had, and sometimes an unfortunate knack, for, unconsciously he would associate certain people's features with particular acts. If he represented in one battle-piece a soldier flying with fear and terror expressed on his countenance, his crayon would, in spite of himself, trace the familiar features of some well-known personage who had distinguished himself by a lack of pluck; and in one of his grand pictures, wishing to represent a rapacious grasping Israelite, he drew the features of a contemporary, whom many will recognise at the first glance. I have said this was sometimes an unfortunate knack, because it has occasionally got him into trouble. In this instance, it was a happy knack. On the appointed day, Grosjean swaggered into Vernet's studio, and resented with a somewhat haughty look the artist's *Bon jour, mon ami*, which he thought rather familiar from a painter in his hire, but he recovered his equanimity when he beheld his finished portrait, a bold sketch in oil colours. Holding it out at arm's length, Grosjean exclaimed:

"*Sapristi! c'est bien beau! It's well worth the money. In fact, it's better than Baptiste's, and he paid thirty sous for his. I shall recommend you, monsieur.*" "No! pray don't," said Vernet; "at least, not to many." "No? Why?" "Well, I can assure you that I lose five or six sous by that picture. You see, I've put the helmet in, and vermillion has risen again." "That's different; but you shan't lose by me. Here, monsieur, are thirty sous." "You are very kind; but before I take it, tell me for whom is the picture?" "It is for my old mother." "Ah! I suppose she will hang it up in her drawing-room?" "Drawing-room, monsieur! No, she has only one room—our whole house is only a large room." "Why, is she so very poor?" "No; but peasants—you

know how they live? She can still afford to send me a franc or two now and then, as she did last week. She sent me forty sous, for she had finished the harvest, you know." "Ah! well, look here, *mon brave*; have it put in a frame. Take this. Hush! Come, come; you have a fine head, and if you look at that large picture, you will see that I have made another portrait of you. There, there, *adieu!* It's all right, *mon ami*. Nonsense, *lad—adieu!*"

Poor Grosjean, bewildered, and so suddenly fallen from his high position of patron of the fine arts, was gently pushed out of the studio.

When he got into the street, he opened one hand, and saw in it two five-franc pieces. In the other he held the most tip-top martial-looking dragoon he had ever seen in his life. The tip-top dragoon was to gladden his old mother's eyes, and the money was to buy a frame for the grand picture. Mars felt a stir in his heart, and growled, "*Sapristi! what a good devil!*" Then, recovering his dignity, he gave a vigorous thump on the top of his tiger-skinned helmet, and swore "*Revenge!*"

He looked around him—his eye caught some unsightly blotches of mud on that beautiful polished oak staircase. Whereupon, mumbling "*I know,*" he hastened home to barracks.

Our regiment remained two years in Versailles after this incident, during which time Vernet was puzzled by the attentions of an invisible good fairy, who every Saturday laid a clean straw mat, cleverly plaited, at the foot of his grand staircase. But the fairy mat-maker was no other than the sturdy old trooper Grosjean.

SMALL-BEER CHRONICLES.

I SHOULD be fulfilling but very imperfectly the duties of my office if I failed to take brief notice of a certain tendency which has recently become developed among us towards a kind of materialistic spiritualism, and what I will venture to call Scientific Piousness.

We are hungry and thirsty for spiritual news. The mysteries of life are pressing on us so heavily as to become almost intolerable. Our appetite for knowledge is desperately keen. The fruit of the tree of which we have partaken has been culled only from those branches that are within our reach as we stand on tiptoe, or those to which our hardest adventurers have climbed with scaling ladders. And this is too little for us. For we know now by means of our instruments and calculations, that this same tree of knowledge is of mighty stature. The fruit upon its topmost boughs we cannot even see, far less, reach. Its roots go further down than we can dig—even to the centre of the earth. What shall we do? That golden fruit which hangs so high, how shall we attain to it? There are, indeed, some who profess to climb higher than others, some who pretend to shake those topmost boughs, and who bid us look out for the apples that shall fall. Alas! such

men are weak, and can only, with all their efforts, bring down such rotten fruit as has in its dead stem no hold upon the tree, or else they are mere charlatans and impostors, who have taken the apples up in their pockets, to throw them down again to the gaping crowd below. There are members of that crowd who receive the fruit eagerly, and feed upon it to their hurt, but the wiser among them can detect an earthly taint in it, and do their best to warn their neighbours away from it.

Among those who carry up into high places the fruit which they profess to gather when they get there, the modern material spiritualists occupy a prominent place; and it is a singular instance of the ravenous state we are in for knowledge of the unseen, that people will almost help their spiritual aeronaut to stow away in his pockets, before he mounts the Tree, the very apples which, when thrown down again to them, they take to be fruit grown on those high branches which are out of our reach. They are also quite willing to wait till it is dark before the apples descend to them, in order that they may neither see their prophet pull them out of his pocket, nor be able to detect the smile upon his countenance as he plays the trick.

That a spiritualism of chairs and tables, and auctioneer's hammering, should ever have taken hold of the minds of even the weaker members of our society, is a sufficient proof of the extremity of hunger we are in for some of those same apples which grow away from our reach, and beyond the range of mortal eyesight.

But other matter to take hold of the speculative mind, has of late been furnished by our Scientific Prophets, and this matter, as the result of researches made by good men and true, may occupy us fairly enough. And it is curious to observe that these last discoverers make no mystery of their mode of working. When they climb they show us how they climb, and bid us watch—by broad daylight—every step of their upward progress. They bid us watch them with telescopes and instruments when our weak eyes fail, and so follow them to that point where, as their strength gives way, they stretch out a feeble and exhausted hand to grasp at the fruit, of which sometimes they only bring down a portion, while oftenest, it slips away from them even at the last, and they descend to earth, worn and despondent, with only tidings of what the apple was like. Honour to these true prophets, and confusion, doubly confounded, to the false!

Now, these last remarks have been called forth by the strange prognostications of possible changes in the earth's condition which have lately reached us from different quarters, and at different times, and which seem dimly to hint at things to stir the souls of those who have time and opportunity to watch what is going on around them, in a speculative temper of mind. It was but the other day that a great chemist and scientific authority thought it needful to warn the world that there was

reason to fear that a certain element in the soil, necessary to the production of the food we live on, was in many parts of the civilised globe gradually wearing out. To how many startling speculations does the mere suggestion of such a possibility as this, give rise! What if this should be the end of our greatness. The greatness of Rome and of Greece was brought to an end; will ours terminate through the slow decay of the very ground we live on? Who can keep his fancy in order, after once suffering it to entertain such an idea? With the eye of imagination one sees, year by year, the country growing less and less productive, the harvests becoming poorer and poorer. Then, the stimulants and sauces with which we have of late tried to revive the digestive powers of the jaded old soil begin to fail, and the patient is subjected to a course of still more pungent tonics and appetisers, under which, its powers revive a little, but only for a very, very short time, after which there is a terrible reaction, and the case becomes desperate. And now, what solemn consultations take place, what discussions go on in the newspapers. How, one after another, all sorts of expedients are suggested; one gentleman, writing to the Times to say that he has tried sprinkling his back-garden with cayenne pepper with the most happy results; while another has produced a fine crop of turnips by syringing his field with toast-and-water. Every correspondent entirely disproves what the man before him asserted, and what the "Constant Reader" swears by, the "Old Subscriber" denounces. At last we have a final meal on water-cresses, and stinging-nettles, and come to the conclusion that poor old England must be abandoned like the "Deserted Village," and that we must be off to some other part of the globe with all convenient speed.

What an exodus that will be. Off we go, carrying our sick in litters. Æneas has his father on his back, and his infant daughter carries a kitten under her arm. What preparations have to be made before we start. What impossible things we want to take with us. One gentleman is for taking up all the railway lines dispersed over the kingdom, and transporting them to the new country; another thinks we might take the Houses of Parliament with us if we numbered the stones and set them up again in their proper order. (But in Heaven's name let us leave it behind.) Then where should we go? What negotiation would be necessary with foreign powers? The move would be westward, of course—almost all movement has been in a westerly direction, from the beginning of the world to the establishment of Tyburnia and South Kensington. Westward we should go, probably across the Atlantic. By that time the population of the States might be exterminated, and we might meet with no opposition.

Another rather startling theory has lately been put forward—the earth, it seems, is growing cold. We are told that its internal heat, its vital warmth we may almost call it, is

losing its intensity. Gracious Heaven! What if the globe, like everything upon it, should be mortal! What if it has only an allotted span of life, and is getting past its prime! Suppose, century after century, it should get colder and colder, and weaker and yet more weak. Suppose its inhabitants should do the same, their passions gradually dying out, the race declining first in energy and ultimately in numbers, until at last there is an end of all; the people extinct, the world dead, but still lingering in the firmament, the pale spectre of its former self—like the moon, which surely looks, on careful inspection, like the ghost of a dead world, depopulated, and icy cold. Its very lustre is cadaverous, and its light is not its own, but borrowed.

The earth certainly seems to have some of the characteristics of mortality. It has its ague-fits, which make it quake. If you overwork it, or tax it too much, it breaks down, as a man or an animal does—witness the failure of certain wine-crops, and the exhaustion of certain portions of the over-taxed soil. What do we know of the earth? It is terrible to know so little. Between us and the antipodes what is there? There are strata of rocks of different orders, there are metal, coal, water, fire—of the last we want more news. What is the exact nature and extent of that great furnace? How many thousands of square miles of the glowing mass? How is the fuel supplied to it? If there be fire it must consume, one would think; or, if there be nothing for it to consume, it must go out. Where does the draught come from to keep it alive?

Perhaps it will be said that there is heat in the central portion of the earth, without fire: just as there is heat, but no fire in the human body; and this again is suggestive of life in the earth, seeing that heat in the bodies of animals is there, only while life is there. The heat and the vitality go together; and if this be so with the earth, and if it should be true that its warmth is slowly declining, the natural inference would be that its life is ebbing gradually away, and that the warmth—as in the old or dying animal—is declining first, at the extremities. Is there no possibility of making experiments in connexion with this interesting question. Could we not bore more deeply into the globe we live in, than we have ever done yet? Could we not test the temperature at a certain depth, and then ten years afterwards try it again at exactly the same distance from the external surface?

Every addition to our knowledge gives us an added idea of the amount of life and movement that there is in the world. We always find there is less of inertness and more of sensitiveness and vitality in all things than we expected. To the ignorant, a tooth is a piece of bone; to the initiated, it is a living, sensitive organ. There is less of torpid existence than we imagine: more, much more, of life. How wonderful is that life of plants, of which we know so much. We can breed them of different kinds, as we can animals. We almost get to believe them conscious.

It is a theory which I have heard put forward by one of our greatest scientific authorities, that there is **NOTHING STILL IN THE WORLD**. Every object, according to this system, be it what it may, is compounded of infinitesimal atoms, cohering with a greater or less degree of density and closeness; and those atoms are all, and at all times, in motion. Even an iron crowbar will not be like what it looks like now, a thousand years hence; the changes which are to make it that different thing at the end of that period, are in operation at this moment, and will be in operation through all the intervening moments. Life and movement everywhere. Everywhere progression—except in the mind of an obstinate and prejudiced man, which is almost the only stationary thing under the sun.

But whither is all this movement tending? One tendency, at any rate, induced by all that we have learned, and all that we have speculated on, is a tendency to inquire further, and to beat at the gate of the temple of knowledge with eager hands and importunate cries. We must not be impatient, however. Geology is but a young science. We know not what it may reveal to us, as it advances towards maturity. We are finding our way through the Mont Cenis; who knows but that our research may, ere long, take a downward direction, so that we may get something more than a mere surface knowledge of this great round mass on which it is our lot to dwell?

A CHEAP PASSAGE HOME.

"THIRTY-EIGHT, I think you said, with extras, and the steward's fee two guineas more?" I asked. My tone of voice was despondent enough, for I saw something like a lazy scorn come over the clerk's face as he replied,

"That's correct. Two guineas at least."

"Those, then, are the lowest terms for cabin passengers."

"The lowest, by the James Watt," returned the shipping clerk, with every sign of being bored at my pertinacity, and rustling the leaves of his ledger to and fro.

"You may, of course, get berthed much more cheaply among the Dutch or Spanish vessels in harbour, but in that case we can do nothing to further your views."

I sighed and turned away. Poverty, no doubt, often causes a man to take a jaundiced view of the conduct and motives of those around him; but I could not help fancying that the persons lounging about the office where this brief dialogue had taken place, and who had looked up from their newspapers, or suspended their chat to listen to my request, were regarding me with contemptuous wonder. A foreigner, fairly well dressed, in that city of palaces, and unable or unwilling to pay some forty-four pounds for a luxurious passage to England!

I hurried away, but when out of sight of the office windows, I sat down upon a stone post on

the broad quay, and gave myself up to reflections of a character rather bitter than sweet. Three years spent in Russia, and nothing to show for them. Three years of change and toil, of waiting and enforced inaction, of hardships and hard work, but where was the fruit of so much thought and labour. There was none; I was leaving the czar's dominions a still poorer man than I had entered them, and this not from any improvidence or indolence on my own part, but in consequence of a series of petty misfortunes. It was not that I had not occasionally had well-paid employment in my own line as an analytical chemist; but that I had vainly tried to save—the great expense of living and travelling in Russia keeping my purse lean in spite of myself. Lately I had been retained for several months, at a liberal salary, to assay the ores and other products of Prince Vassilikoff's mines in the Ural chain, and my thoughts and fingers had been ceaselessly busy with malachite and platinum, gold grains and native copper. But soon after my engagement came to an end, the breaking of a bank had mulcted one-half of my little savings, and the expenses of a tedious country fever, of which I sickened at Taganrog, had reduced my funds to a very low ebb indeed.

So there I was, on the quay of Odessa, wistfully computing the amount of a few dollars and roubles that remained, and pondering on the best means of getting home to England, where I had hopes of promptly obtaining employment. My anxiety was not entirely selfish. I had a mother and sisters at home, not, indeed, dependent upon me for support, but in narrow circumstances, and I had often promised myself the pleasure of giving them many comforts which had been theirs in earlier days, and before my father's misfortunes and death. This now could not be. My slender means required to be most carefully husbanded, were I to get home at all. And I was still weak and emaciated after the fever, and unfit to bear much privation, or I might have found an economical passage on board one of those unclean foreign vessels, whose slovenly decks and untidy rigging contrasted so strongly with the trimness of the *James Watt*, at anchor beyond.

There was a Spanish schooner, deep laden, that was moored close to the quay. Her decks were encumbered and foul, her cabins, as I guessed, mere flea-haunted dens, and the shaggy olive skinned crew, in their red sashes and red Catalan caps, were quarrelling over their greasy cards or eating with wooden spoons some dark mess of semi-liquid food, the garlic and oil of which I could smell from where I sat. No doubt the Spaniard would take me as a passenger at a low rate, but I was ill and weak yet, and could not bring myself to face a month in such companionship.

There were plenty of vessels, lofty-masted American clippers, huge-hulled barques from Bremen or Hamburg, Dutch, Turkish, and Maltese craft, but only a per-centage bound for England, and none so attractive as the *James*

Watt. I sighed as I glanced at her red chimneys, clean decks, shining cabin windows, the awning over her poop, and the spruce figure-head as gay as paint and Dutch metal could make it, and thought how pleasant would have been the run home in her, over the summer sea. There is a longing for home that seizes on a lonely Englishman, and especially a sick Englishman, in a far distant country, to which words cannot do justice. It must be *felt*.

"Pardon me, sir, if I intrude! You seek a passage to Liverpool? do you not?" said a soft musical voice at my elbow, a voice soft enough and musical enough to have belonged to a young girl. I turned my head, and saw that the person who had accosted me was a well dressed, slightly built young man, with a smooth dark face and brilliant restless eyes. Very handsome, and very elegant, as he stood beside me, gracefully bowing, with uplifted hat and winning smile, but the first impression on my mind was one of distrust. I felt ashamed of the impression.

"You seek a passage? Indeed I know that you do. I was in the office, yonder, when you called just now."

And he pointed with his supple forefinger, clothed in spotless yellow kid, towards the imposing edifice I had so lately left. He had been there, then, I thought, probably concealed from me by that group of newspaper-reading loungers of which I have spoken, and I was silly enough to feel a twinge of pain at the reflection that he had heard my questions and the clerk's replies, and knew how poor I was. The young man possibly guessed what was passing through my mind, for his flexible voice assumed a tone of grave courtesy as he resumed:

"Forgive my intrusion. I am not prompted by idle curiosity, I do assure you. It is a matter of mutual convenience that I wish to speak about. You are going to England, and I am in a position to offer you the chance of making the trip as comfortable as if you embarked in the *James Watt*, and as economical as if you put up with the miseries of one of those exceedingly dirty but picturesque craft before us."

The distrustful impression was waxing very faint by this time, but I still felt some doubts as to the exact social status of my new acquaintance. He was not a sailor, that was plain, and while his look and tone were those of an educated man, he was too young for a merchant.

"Then you have—you are—" I began, in some perplexity.

"Not a tout—not *that*, I assure you, since I see that you are too polite to finish the sentence," said my companion, with a ringing laugh that spoke of exuberant spirits and a genial nature; "I am merely the supercargo of the *Seven Angels* there, about to sail for Liverpool, and I should gladly take you with us on the voyage—that is all, my dear sir."

The impression was quite gone now, and as I looked at the noble ship, a stately three-master, anchored some cables' length from the quay, I felt a thrill of pleasure, slightly alloyed by doubts

as to whether I and my new friend could really come to terms. To my great relief, however, I found this an easy affair. The Seven Angels was to sail on Tuesday, the day before that appointed for the departure of the James Watt, and I could be well accommodated on board of her for a very few pounds.

"This is how we stand," said the young supercargo, "and this you have a right to know. The ship, an old one but a good one, is going to England with a cargo of wheat from this port, added to which we are to take in oil at Trebizond. The freight being an unusually valuable one, I have been put on board as supercargo, my father, you must know, being part owner of vessel and goods, the remaining shares in which belong to other merchants of this place. Now, the ship not being regularly on the Liverpool line, seldom carries passengers, ample and well-fitted as her cabins are, and we never advertise. It so happens that an English merchant of this place has begged us as a favour to take charge of his daughter going home to finish her education at a Brighton school, and there is some awkwardness about it, for though Captain Veltrivitch is a good fatherly old man, his time is much taken up, and, in a word, Miss Brackley cannot sit all day in the cabin in no other company than mine. So, you see, if you will take a berth, you will relieve us from some embarrassment, and I will promise not to charge you a coopek more than cost price, so that if you go slowly, your trip will be cheap and not disagreeable. Come aboard and judge for yourself."

And, a boat being quickly hailed, we were soon aboard the Seven Angels, a large and handsome ship, faultlessly trim and neat, though with the high poop and elaborate stern-galleries of the antique naval style of architecture. The captain was ashore, but we were speedily ushered into the cabins, which were certainly handsome and snug, and more than warranted the commendations of the supercargo. The few seamen I saw about were smart fellows, Hydriotes and other Levantines; there was not a rope out of its place; the decks were almost white enough to belong to a ship of war; but I was particularly struck by the appearance of the holy pictures, with lamps burning before them, and of the massive group of wooden images, gay with paint and gold leaf, doing duty for a figure-head. Never had I been on board a Russian ship before, but I could easily believe, what my guide assured me, that this was a favourable specimen of their mercantile marine.

"What name shall I have the pleasure of putting down?" said my young friend, producing from a locker a clasped book, and dipping his pen in the ink.

"Millington—Alfred Millington," said I; "may I, in return, ask *your* name and nation? Your English is perfect, but I hardly fancy we are countrymen."

"In a certain sense we are," said the young man, with one of his bright smiles; "I am an Ionian—a Greek from Corfu—and my name is Spiridion Colotroni, at your service."

During the three or four days which preceded the ship's sailing, Spiridion and I became quite intimate, and the young Greek did me several petty kindnesses, doubly grateful to a stranger in so lively a town as Odessa. Thanks to his introduction I was made free of several circles and clubs, which are frequented not only by the merchants of the place, but by the smartest of the staff officers and government functionaries, and where I was kindly made welcome. Also, although unable to present me to his own family, then absent at a sea-side villa some leagues off, Spiridion introduced me to his father's partners, and to that Mr. Brackley whose only child, as a great favour, was to be transported to England on board the Seven Angels.

We dined at Mr. Brackley's the day before sailing, and I shall never forget the group that I then saw gathered in the merchant's drawing-room, connected as it is with the memory of the terrible events which followed. The master of the house was a plain, downright man enough, a little rough and blunt of speech and bearing, perhaps, and it struck me that his quiet wife, a subdued little personage with hair prematurely grey, and a nervous manner, stood in great awe of his displeasure. But there was no mistaking the unselfishness and depth of the father's love for his only child; his voice was softened when he spoke to her or of her, his eyes followed her about the room with a sort of sad pride, and I could see that all his hopes and feelings were wrapped up in plans for her welfare.

As for Marian Brackley, she was simply an honest English girl, rather pretty, and very good humoured and full of blithe youthful spirits. They were sending her to her all but forgotten native land, the place which they still fondly called "home," for a better and more solid education than Odessa could supply, and she was sorry to leave her parents, but full of wonder and curiosity about the Western European world, and especially the great cities of London and Paris, which she was to see before returning. The only other person present was the commander of the Seven Angels, and he was the member of the company most worthy of remark.

Captain Veltrivitch was a grand looking old seaman; there was something noble and majestic in his tall and upright form, his stately head and weather-beaten face, with its shaggy white eyebrows and the fringe of white hair that hung about his high forehead. He wore two Russian decorations, and was somewhat stiff and slow in his gait, in consequence, as Spiridion told me, of a wound in the knee received at Navarino. He had, indeed, served long and creditably in the imperial navy, but when I asked my Greek informant why he had left it, Spiridion laid his finger on his lips, and muttered something about political reasons. I remarked that, contrary to the usual custom of veterans, the aged officer was not inclined to dilate upon his military career, and when Mr. Brackley touched on the subject, he answered with dry brevity, and showed signs of relief when some other topic was started.

But the captain of the Seven Angels was far from being a silent member of the party; he talked well and pleasantly of the interior of Russia, of seafaring experiences during the four years he had filled his present post, and not only of foreign ports but also of foreign capitals, their architecture, picture-galleries, and so forth. His language and anecdotes were those of a well-informed person, and I took much pleasure in his conversation, but after a time an odd fancy seized upon me. I fancied that Captain Veltrivitch was afraid of Spiridion, that he watched his eye as a dog watches the countenance of his master, and that, according to the expression of Spiridion's bright face, so the captain's vivacity rose or fell, and his flow of words slackened or increased. Nay, such is the power of imagination, that I thought that once or twice I intercepted a stolen look of command, a quick imperious flash, in the eyes of the young supercargo, and that each time this occurred the old captain, whose spirits had begun to flag, and whose features were sinking into moody repose, started, made an effort over his own sad thoughts, and took up the ball of conversation with the utmost good humour. And yet I must have been mistaken, for how absurd was the notion that such a careless butterfly nature as that of gay Spiridion could exercise authority over that of the stout old seaman, in whose praise Mr. Brackley was loud when the captain bade us good night, and departed the first of the company.

"A noble old fellow!" said the merchant, warmly, rubbing his broad hands together; "he is about the only Russian commander to whose care I should have liked to entrust my girl. He has children of his own. By the way, Colotroni, has anything been heard lately of that son of his in Siberia?"

Spiridion gave a little start, but immediately recovered his composure.

"Not to my knowledge," he answered; "the skipper never cares to talk on that subject. Perhaps the young man is dead. At any rate, he is dead to the world."

"No chance of his pardon, I suppose?" said Mr. Brackley, in a meditative way, for the pain of parting with his daughter had made him unusually sympathetic with the griefs of others.

Spiridion was afraid there was no such chance. Still, greater offenders had been released before the expiration of their sentence, and no one knew when some whim of clemency might possess the imperial mind, or the minds of the Czar's ministers. And, for the sake of the poor gallant old father, he, Spiridion, would be glad to hear that the younger Veltrivitch had a chance of pardon; to which Mr. Brackley heartily, and Mrs. Brackley timidly, assented.

"At ten to-morrow, then, I shall bring Marian on board. You sail at noon, sharp?" said the merchant, as he bade us good night.

"Sharp! The captain is as punctual as Time himself," answered Spiridion, as he waved his hand in adieu. We walked homewards arm in arm, since my lodging was near the water-

side, where also stood the Colotroni's house, and, as I went on through the moonlit streets, I could not help reverting to the theme of Captain Veltrivitch and his son. "A political offence, of course?" I hinted.

Spiridion made answer in his usual airy way: "Political—to be sure it was. In Russia, you know, we move in an atmosphere of intrigues, domestic or politic; the very air is thick with plots. I see you are dying to know the history of the Veltrivitch family, and though I am not fully conversant with its details, I can at least give you a sketch. The captain was well off; a noble, of course, or he could not have been an officer in the Russian navy. He doated on his son, young Demetrius, who was a lieutenant in his own ship. Well, the lad picked up dangerous ideas, dangerous friends, got mixed up in a conspiracy, and the whole affair was found out, as always happens. The youngster would not have been very severely dealt with, but unfortunately he had laid hands on a certain chest of silver roubles belonging to the government, and which, in his amiable zeal, he had devoted to the use of his visionary republic; this was a great fault, and he has been in Siberia these five years."

"And the father?"

"Old Veltrivitch was tried by court-martial, on suspicion of being his son's accomplice. I really don't know whether he was acquitted, or whether the emperor put a stop to the proceedings. But I am certain that he resigned his commission voluntarily, and, soon after, he came here, and became a merchant skipper. He was all but ruined; I believe his son had been very extravagant, and so forth, before the crash came, but what does a poor Sybarite like myself know of plots and schemes? Eh, my dear semi-countryman, youth should be a time for enjoyment. You won't come to the circle and have a few last games of dominoes, and some punch? Then good night, and a riverderla!"

And I heard him humming an opera tune as he went up the marble steps. For the first time this gaiety of his grated somewhat on my feelings; his tone in speaking of old Veltrivitch and his misfortunes had been careless, almost exultant, and I began to doubt whether the exquisite urbanity of my Greek friend might not hide a very callous heart. And yet I blamed myself, as I strode on, for entertaining harsh thoughts of Spiridion, or expecting too much sensibility from that light and shallow nature. The young Greek had been kind to me, kind to the merchant, our late host, kind even to poor neglected Mrs. Brackley, kind to Marian, our future fellow-passenger, to whom his bearing was brotherly and frank, and it was too much to expect that he should always take a serious view of the misfortunes of others. And having reasoned thus, I laid my head upon the pillow, and dreamed of England and the dear ones at home.

We weighed anchor next day, with every prospect of fine weather. Only a few rounded masses of white cloud, like so many woolpacks, rolled languidly across the deep blue of the sky, the little waves glistened as if modelled in

glass, and there was just breeze enough to fill the topsails of the good ship, as she swam majestically out of the roadstead. Before long Odessa, its busy quays, its many masts, white houses, and church roofs of various bright colours, faded away from our sight, and the tall ships themselves were hull down in the haze of distance.

Mr. Brackley had brought his daughter, and his daughter's trunks and handboxes, on board in very good time. He tried to feign supreme content and cheerfulness, spoke of Marian's voyage as a mere holiday trip, and her absence as of trifling duration, and did his best to be jovial and light of spirit. But there was a good deal of pain behind this mask of gaiety; it was the merchant's first separation from the darling child with whose life and happiness his very heart-strings were knit up, and it was plain that to say farewell cost him a sharp pang. There were tears in Marian Brackley's eyes too, but she bravely kept them back. She knew, probably, that had she given way to grief her father would have been quite unmanned. I turned away my own eyes not to see the last embrace between parent and child, and made myself purposely deaf to the last few broken words of parting, and then the shore boat, the rowers of which had long been getting uneasy and impatient, was cast off, and we saw Mr. Brackley standing up in the stern-sheets, waving his hat and hand as long as hat and hand continued to be visible. Then old Captain Veltrivitch led the sobbing girl down to her state-room.

"Better rest a little while, my dear," said he, in his slowly uttered but perfectly pure English; "I am your father's deputy, and I must not let you break your heart on the first day of the voyage."

The arrangements of the *Seven Angels* were comfortable enough. There was a large and handsome cabin—what in a regular packet would have been dubbed the saloon—and into this all our state-rooms, as well as the captain's cabin and steward's pantry, opened. The deep stern windows offered the most delightful cool and snug lounging places, where the ear was soothed by the eternal wash and ripple of the water as it seethed and swelled under the ship's counter and against the rudder, and through the windows themselves was to be seen a stretch of dimpling blue waves, framed as in a picture. There was a stern gallery too, where we could idle in fine weather, and the lofty poop, with its awning to keep off the strong rays of the Eastern sun, was a point of observation from which we could look out while enjoying the breeze.

We had nothing to find fault with, for not only was a good table kept, but, thanks to the liberality of the owners, there was a cow on board, and we had fresh milk, the rarest of luxuries in a Mediterranean voyage. But, indeed, we were bidden to consider ourselves rather as guests than as paying passengers, and it was undeniable that the proprietors of the *Seven Angels* had no eye to screwing a profit out of our fare.

The ship was a fine one, but a slow sailer; even a seaman's partiality could not help acknowledging that, and though I was not very experienced in maritime matters, I could not but imagine that the *Seven Angels* was more fit for the calm than the rough of ocean life. The fine weather which witnessed our departure from Odessa proved fickle, and a bout of stormy weather succeeded, during which the huge old vessel groaned and creaked in a most lugubrious manner, shipped so many seas that the hatches had to be battened down and the ports made fast, and sprung a leak, which kept the grumbling crew busy at the pumps. But Captain Veltrivitch handled her skilfully, and when the gale fell the leak was adroitly stopped, and the clang of chain and lever ceased. Still, the wind continued provokingly variable, and we were repeatedly forced out of our course, and driven far to the westward over the muddy waters of the Black Sea—waters more shallow and dirty, but more perilous to navigators, than any in the Levant. At last we bore up for Trebizond, where the oil destined to complete our cargo was taken in, and where the Armenian caulkers soon patched up the vessel's injured side, and then we sailed again.

"Slow work, Millington, but not, I hope, dull or comfortless," said Spiridion, gaily; "we have paid our forfeit to Neptune, and shall probably bowl from the Dardanelles to the Mersey as smoothly as a Cowes yacht in the Solent. The barometer tells a very satisfactory tale."

These words were spoken on the evening which witnessed our departure from Trebizond, as we stood under the awning that shaded the poop, gazing now upon the white and yellow town, lessening to Lilliputian proportions as we made sail to seawards, now towards the west, where a blended web of colours, with crimson predominating, stained all the sunset waters. Spiridion was in high spirits on that evening; he insisted on bringing Miss Brackley's guitar on deck, and sang us several songs in different languages, playing a masterly accompaniment, for he was a capital musician. Captain Veltrivitch, on the other hand, was restless and ill at ease, made curt and peevish answers to any remark addressed to him, and was, for the first time, very bad company. The wind served us well that night, but on the following day, which was sultry and oppressive, light puffs of air succeeded to the steady breeze, and after wasting much time and trouble in incessant tacks and changes of course, we finally lay-to for the night, some five miles from the coast of Asia Minor.

How well I remember that evening, with the purple mountains of Anatolia looming in the distance, and the sun going down, blood red, on the European side. There was no cause for apprehension, and it had been out of a prudent resolve to avoid the chance of a collision during the darkness with some of the numerous craft that swarm about the entrance to the Bosphorus, that our commander had resolved on lying by for the night. To-morrow we should see the Castles before noon, and, a few hours later, Constantinople itself.

The crew were lounging about the deck, forwards, some preparing their supper, which chiefly consisted of outlandish Russian salads, made with the fresh vegetables brought from Trebizond, some asleep, and others gathered about the forecabin, where a fiddle was sounding merrily. The fiddler was Jack Judkins, a little sun-browned English sailor, the life of the ship before the mast, as Spiridion was of the state-cabin. He was the only Briton on board, except a gaunt grave seaman from Aberdeen, Æneas M'Donald by name, and whose austere demeanour made a fine contrast to the other's flippancy of bearing and speech. Oddly enough, the tall Scotchman had an inseparable messmate still more utterly unlike himself than Judkins, a brisk negro lad, whose white teeth and rolling eyeballs were now expressing the utmost approval of the jig which the amateur fiddler played. This negro, whose name was Roderick Sprowle, but who was never known by any other title than "Rod," or "Black Rod," was, I believe, a runaway from some Carolina plantation, and had a curious affection and admiration for M'Donald, whom he had followed from ship to ship, never caring where he engaged his services, so that he could be near his white friend. It was curious to see this ill-assorted Damon and Pythias together, and Judkins always spoke of them as Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday.

The rest of the crew were not very interesting personages. About half of them were dull bearish mujiks from Malorossia, while the rest were keen-visaged Hydriote and Mainote Greeks, tolerable sailors, but somewhat averse to sustained exertion. It was creditable to Captain Veltrivitch that with such heterogeneous materials he had got the ship into so good a condition as to discipline.

I had always had a taste for the sea, and it had become a habit with me to go forward and chat with my fellow-countrymen and their black ally—a fortunate habit, as it turned out, since the men had thus got to know me better and trust me more, than could otherwise have been the case.

Once or twice, on this particular evening, as I stood with the other cabin inmates beside the taffrail, I fancied that Æneas M'Donald was watching my movements, and that he seemed anxious to attract my attention without provoking remark from the black-capped Russians or greaved and kilted Greeks around him. I had no cause to be mysterious in my proceedings, but man is an imitative creature, and the Scotchman's evident caution infected me with some of his own distrust for the foreign portion of the crew. I therefore left the group aft with as careless an air as I could assume, and sauntered languidly forward to where the gaunt form of the Scottish mariner, in blue Jersey and Kilmar-nock cap, towered above the bulwarks. M'Donald had passed one arm through the last round of the Jacob's ladder, and was meditatively chewing a quid and staring at the water below, when I came up.

"Good evening, Mac," said I; "a fine night we shall have, unless there's a shift in the wind."

"Deed, sir, but ye're richt," answered the wary Aberdonian, lifting his eyes and taking one of those sweeping surveys of sky and sea so customary with an old sailor; then dropping his voice, he added:

"Mr. Millington, I jalouse there's a squall brewin' here aboard. I've noted mair whispering and signals than suld be amang honest men."

"The plague you have!" said I. "Do you mean that you suspect a mutiny?"

"Hoot! whisht! have a care, gudesake!" interrupted Æneas, hurriedly; "some o' they loons understand English. That's just it, sir. There's some colloguing and plots afoot; and the puir creature Rod being just a simple black sumph, and Judkins a feather-brained gowk, I've naeboddy to tak' counsel wi' but yoursel, landsman though you be, at the back o't."

M'Donald's conclusion was scarcely complimentary, but this was no time to indulge any silly sentiments of wounded self-consequence. I knew the Scot to be a cool, long-headed fellow, steel to the backbone in danger, and with the experience derived from a quarter of a century's seafaring all over the globe. I had heard, too, of ugly things being done on board Levantine vessels, and as I looked around at the muscular forms and brutish features of the Russian mariners, and at the piratical aspect of the Greeks, with their gaudy jackets, embossed greaves, and kilts of dirty white, I could not deny that we were utterly at their mercy, should there really be a conspiracy to seize the ship.

After some serious talk, it was agreed that I should take the earliest opportunity of informing Captain Veltrivitch, privately, that a suspicious intelligence existed among several of the crew, and that the officers and passengers had better be on their guard. I should have mentioned that the first mate was a Russian, the second being a Greek, and that it was M'Donald's opinion that the superior of these, at any rate, was ignorant of any plot.

I went aft, and to my surprise I found Miss Brackley alone upon the poop, reading. She told me that Spiridion had gone away as soon as I went forward, pleading headache, and announcing his intention to lie down for a while, but that the captain had very lately quitted the deck. I at once descended the companion-ladder, determined to tap at the door of the skipper's cabin and tell my tale without delay; but as my foot was on the last step of the narrow and winding stair, I heard a word that checked my progress, hushed my very breathing, and appeared to curdle the blood in my veins.

The word was "Murder."

"Murder! that I should do it! I a murderer!" said some one in a thick broken voice, the voice of Captain Veltrivitch. The answer to this passionate exclamation was in the clear mocking tones of Spiridion:

"Bah, mon capitaine! what's in a name? When anything gets in my way, I crush it, man or scorpion. Be a man, Alexis Veltrivitch, and remember what is at stake. The liberty of your

son. It is the gold of the underwriters who have insured the *Seven Angels*, ship and cargo, that must furnish the bribe that sets him free."

There was a pause. Cautiously I bent my body forward, without moving my feet, and could thus see into the great saloon. The door of the captain's cabin was ajar. Those within were not visible, but the sound of their voices reached me with surprising distinctness. They spoke in the French tongue, for Spiridion was not well versed in the Russian language, and of course every word was clearly comprehensible. It was with a sound that was between a sob and a groan that the old captain broke the terrible silence.

"Cannot *she* be saved? It will break her father's heart, and I have broken bread at his table, and he trusted his child to me—the lamb to the butcher. I don't care so much about the others—the men: let them be sacrificed, but the girl—I tell you, Spiridion, I have daughters of my own, and I cannot bear to do this black deed."

"Think of your son," hissed Spiridion, in a tone that was worthy of a tempting fiend—"your son, sick, dying in the mines, and this bribe to the minister's favourite sets him free—gives him back to life and you. This affair over, all our fortunes are made, your rank in the navy will be restored, and I will burn before your face the letters that prove—you know what—the letters relating to the stolen money, and which, if shown to the Czar—"

"Hush! hush!" cried the old man. "I obey, Spiridion, I obey. I am yours, body and soul, alas! Where is the pen. I will write the entry in the ship's log-book—the rest is your work; but ah! cannot the innocent girl be spared?"

"No inconvenient witnesses, I thank you," sneered Spiridion. "Here is the pen—write."

At this moment it occurred to me, stupefied as I was with horror and surprise, that in an instant the plotters would sally forth and detect me, while, if I ascended the companion, it was hardly possible, but that I should make some noise, which might provoke fatal suspicion. Therefore, half instinctively, I stole on tiptoe into the saloon, crouched behind the crimson curtains that hung in heavy folds before the door of Miss Brackley's state-room, and, with all my speed, was but just in time. The conspirators passed by me and went on deck, the captain with an uncertain step, and features in whose painful working might be read the signs of mental suffering, the Greek, jaunty and smooth of mien, but with a dangerous sparkle in his serpent eye, and a paler cheek than usual. Scarcely was the coast clear before I ran to the captain's cabin, the door of which still stood ajar, and there, sure enough, lay the ship's log-book open, and with a fresh entry written on the page before me. The ink was still wet. What I read ran as follows:

"Coast of Anatolia (here followed a latitude and a date). On this night, during the middle watch, the ship *Seven Angels*, from Odessa to Liverpool, with corn and oil, was wholly de-

stroyed by fire, vessel and cargo. Papers—manifest, logs, and invoices saved. Money lost. Officers and most of crew escaped to shore in the large boat. Unfortunately there perished, by the fire, and by upsetting of a smaller boat, the two passengers, Mr. Millington and Miss Marian Brackley, also John Judkins and Eneas M'Donald, able seamen, and Roderick Sprowle, ordinary seaman, shipped at Odessa. Fire the result of accident. Cause doubtful."

Here ended this precious entry, the death-warrant and epitaph, at once, of five human beings, myself included. No wonder that as I perused the words I felt my forehead grow moist with a sickly dew, and that the letters seemed to dance before my eyes. In vain did I try to tear myself away. Some terrible fascination riveted my feet to the floor, my eyes to the page on which still glistened the wet ink of that last dread sentence. How long I stood, thunder-struck and half incredulous, I cannot say, but the rustle of feminine attire caught my ear, and I turned my head with a quick start to find Marian Brackley—one of the doomed—standing in the middle of the saloon, and looking at me. I had left the door wide open, and was, of course, plainly visible, in the act, apparently, of prying into some papers of the captain's.

My impulse to tell Miss Brackley all carried the day, and most fortunate it was that I had not time for reflection. Common-place prudence would have led me to keep the dangerous secret to myself, but this was no ordinary occasion, and, to my great comfort, the young girl showed a fortitude quite unexpected. She did not faint or weep, though her cheeks faded to ashen paleness as she read the dreadful words, and listened to my hasty comments on them. It was evident, I told her, that the wicked scheme for making profit by the destruction of the *Seven Angels* was deeply laid, and that our deaths, along with those of such members of the crew as were not implicated in the plot, were deemed necessary to give colour to the plausible tale of the incendiaries. And now, what was to be done. We were warned, but what hope had we. To tax the villains with their perfidy would be to seal our own fate.

After the first moments of horror, and the doubt with which the innocent usually receive the earliest hints of crime in others, Marian Brackley showed the ready wit of her sex. Still, her pleasant young voice was harsh, and her lips white and trembling, as she said:

"It is very, very dreadful. Poor papa, that loves me so dearly, and mamma, too, at home, what will they do when they hear—and you, Mr. Millington, who have a mother longing to see you, far off in England, and the poor sailors, all to be burned to death for the sake of money,—oh, God help us and forgive them! Mr. Millington, let us fly, let us escape!"

"Escape! but how?" I answered.

Marian's answer was prompt.

"The sailors, that tall young Scotchman above all, they are brave fellows, and used to danger. Go to them, Mr. Millington, and tell

them what shocking schemes are going forward, and perhaps we can all get away. But whatever you do, show these wretches no change in your manner, lest they suspect us."

"You are right, Miss Brackley," said I; "and yet—how to make the men believe me. How to induce them to put faith in so wild a story."

Marian Brackley had a device ready in an instant. Catching up a penknife, with a firm hand and before I could remonstrate, she had cut out the page of the log-book that contained the fatal entry, and given it to me. Then she closed the book and clasped it, bidding me show the writing to M'Donald, as the best evidence of my story's truth.

"It is rash; if the villains return, to find the page gone, we are lost," said I.

"They will not come together. Whichever comes in will believe the log-book to have been closed and clasped by his confederate, and neither will care to open it. Go, Mr. Millington, pray go quickly."

And she almost pushed me out of the cabin. As I ascended the companion-ladder, I saw Spiridion hovering about the hatchway. Guilt is ever suspicious, and he gave me a sharp glance as our eyes met. I kept my countenance well, I suppose, for he instantly took my arm, and strolled along the deck in my company, laughing and chattering in his usual light style, but with rather a forced mirth. It was some time before I could shake him off without appearing anxious to do so, and I began to fear that he meant to keep his eye on me till supper-time, in which case I should have been cut off from communication with the British portion of the crew. But the captain, who was sitting, moody and stern of aspect, beside the tall binnacle lamp, called out impatiently, "Spiridion, come here a moment," and I was set free.

With some little trouble I contrived to attract the notice of the intelligent Aberdeen man, and we held a short but weighty conference beside the bulwarks. M'Donald showed less surprise than I had expected, but twice read over the written words which I cautiously thrust into his hand, and then gruffly remarked that "the day's darg" would be a hard one, but that "with a blessing, we'd win through it."

I asked if he thought we could not take one of the small boats and slip off unperceived, but M'Donald shook his sagacious head, and bade me remark that the launch alone was afloat, and towing astern with the oars in her. The small boats were all on board, and could not be got out without attracting notice; besides, a very cursory inspection of the yawl, that swung near where we stood, showed that the plugs in the bottom of the boat had been removed.

"I've nae doubt, sir, the stony-hearted villains took out the plugs on purpose. They kenned we'd make a struggle for life when they abandoned the ship," said Aeneas; "but leave it to me, and I'll tell Jock Judkins nae mair than is necessary, and Rod Sprowle just naething at a', and all you and the young leddy have to do is

to be on deck, and ready, when the middle watch is set. Go and stand by the man at the wheel and talk poetry or what ye like, and be gaein' at the stars and the clouds, and leave the rest o't to us."

I will not dilate on that last meal, the supper, where we sat down to break bread with assassins. It was a cruel trial. There, opposite to me, sat cowardly murder, in the person of Spiridion, smiling on those who were betrayed to die. There, too, sat Captain Veltrivitch, ill at ease, with bloodshot eyes and quivering features, drinking deeply, and excusing his discomposure on the ground of indisposition. I tried to eat, but every morsel choked me. I tried to talk and laugh, but felt frightened at the sound of my own voice. How I envied Marian her courageous composure.

At rather an earlier hour than usual we all retired to rest, ostensibly at least, Spiridion yawning and stretching his limbs with every sign of lassitude, the captain dogged and dark as ever. A little before the time for changing the watch, I cautiously opened the door of my sleeping cabin, stole out, carrying my slippers in my hand, lest my step should be heard, and, tapping at the door of my fair neighbour's state-room, was quickly joined by Miss Brackley, who was wrapped in a dark cloak, that almost hid her light-coloured muslin dress. We glided up the cabin stairs without exchanging a word.

Sail had been made on the vessel when the breeze freshened at sunset, but the wind was light, and our progress slow. Not a man was to be seen aft of the mainmast, except the helmsman. He was a Greek, and he eyed us with keen and angry scrutiny when first we appeared. As we paid no attention to him, but leant on the taffrail, conversing as usual in a low tone, and, to all seeming, absorbed in contemplation of the glorious starry heaven and sparkling sea, the fellow soon ceased to pay any heed to us, and I heard him chuckle to himself, and hum a scrap of some Romaic song. When the bell struck, and the watch was changed, a black-capped Russian came to take the helm. The Greek whispered something in his ear, and walked forward, and I saw the new comer's strong white teeth glisten as he grinned at his comrade's remark. But he never spoke, and stood with his shoulder towards us, and for a long time I heard nothing but the sullen flap of the sails overhead.

A noise at last. Two men, wrapped in boat cloaks, had come up the cabin stair. One of them had stumbled over a coil of rope in his way, and in the petulant oath he uttered I recognised the voice of Spiridion. The other, and more bulky of the two, was the captain, and I saw them both proceed to the main hatch, withdraw the fastenings, and descend into the hold.

Marian Brackley caught my arm in her quivering fingers, and exclaimed, "O, Mr. Millington, they have fired the ship."

And indeed a spiral column of smoke, accompanied by a crackling sound and a strong smell of burning wood and singed woollen, came

up the cabin hatch. At that instant three dark forms, bending low, came stealing along with noiseless tread under the shadow of the bulwarks. Nearer and nearer they drew, until the helmsman started and bent forward to peer into the darkness. Then the foremost of the stealthy figures leapt on with the bound of a tiger, and, with one blow of a handspike, dashed the Russian senseless on the deck.

"Weel done, Jock Judkins!" whispered M'Donald, hoarsely, as he darted on with bare feet, followed by the negro; "haul in the tow-rope, so; now fair and softly aboard, and the ledly first, when Rod's over the side to help her. Mind your footing, my bonny lassie—a slip might cost a' our lives."

We got on board the boat, unshipped the oars, and cut the "painter;" but I suppose we made some little noise, for a smothered cry arose on board the vessel, and in the bright starlight we saw Spiridion and three or four more rush to the poop with frantic gestures of rage.

"Curses on you! Come back, or I'll fire!" yelled the young Greek, levelling a musket over the rail.

"Fire away, you cowardly lubber; who cares a mouldy biscuit for your gun," bawled Judkins, in derision; but M'Donald, more thoughtful, by a quick jerk of both arms, pulled Marian down under shelter of the thwarts, and the ball hissed by, knocking off Rod's straw hat.

"Hi! Massa 'Donald, him near touch dat," cried the negro, but his words were drowned by the discharge of several muskets from the ship, none of which, however, were well aimed. We pulled vigorously; for luckily I could row almost as well as the sailors, and, heavy as the boat was, our efforts soon carried us out of range. Through the dim distance we could see the black mountains of the coast. Once there, we should be safe. The only real danger was in pursuit. Marian, who had taken her place in the stern-sheets, and who had cast a wild, half despairing look behind, suddenly cried,

"Look there—there—O horrible, most horrible!"

The huge ship was now a seething pyramid of fire; flames spouted from her port-holes, as from the jaws of some fiery dragon; flames ran along her bulwarks; leaped among her rigging; rioted on her deck. The masts were kindling into pillars of flame, the sails, the cordage, were blazing broad and bright. By the glaring light we could plainly see many dark forms, some climbing with desperate agility to yard and truck, in hopes of prolonging life; some toiling to launch the boats, made purposely useless by themselves; some whose frantic gestures of despair gave them the air of demons as they rushed to and fro across that lurid background of fire.

"They're caught in their ain trap. Heaven hae mercy on their sinful souls!" said M'Donald, grimly, but with an unwonted twitching in his stern features.

"Could we not save them? O, save them! it is too dreadful!" cried Marian, sobbing.

But to render aid was impossible. Even if we could safely have trusted the forbearance of such wretches, we were now too far off, and a strong current was sweeping us shorewards. The fearful spectacle was brief. For a little while the burning ship gleamed like a volcano in eruption, then came a dull booming roar, and blazing planks and spars, sails and cordage, went rushing up into the air, as the powder in the hold caught fire. A thick cloud of smoke was the last we saw of the catastrophe.

With some danger and trouble we effected a landing, on a very stony and unfrequented part of the coast, and were received hospitably enough by the Turkish villagers, whose agent us on, by slow stages, to the British Consulate at Trebizond. Our perils were then at an end. Marian Brackley was restored to her home, luckily before the news of the ship's loss reached Odessa; the seamen were forwarded to Constantinople, where they easily found employment; and I was so fortunate as to be offered a passage home in a frigate bound for Portsmouth, and the commander of which had heard of our adventures. These made some noise at the time, and the production of the leaf from the log-book saved the underwriters from a heavy loss, and caused no trifling stir at Odessa.

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